

Grandmother.

A Tale of
Old Kentucky.

Sue
Froman
Matthews.





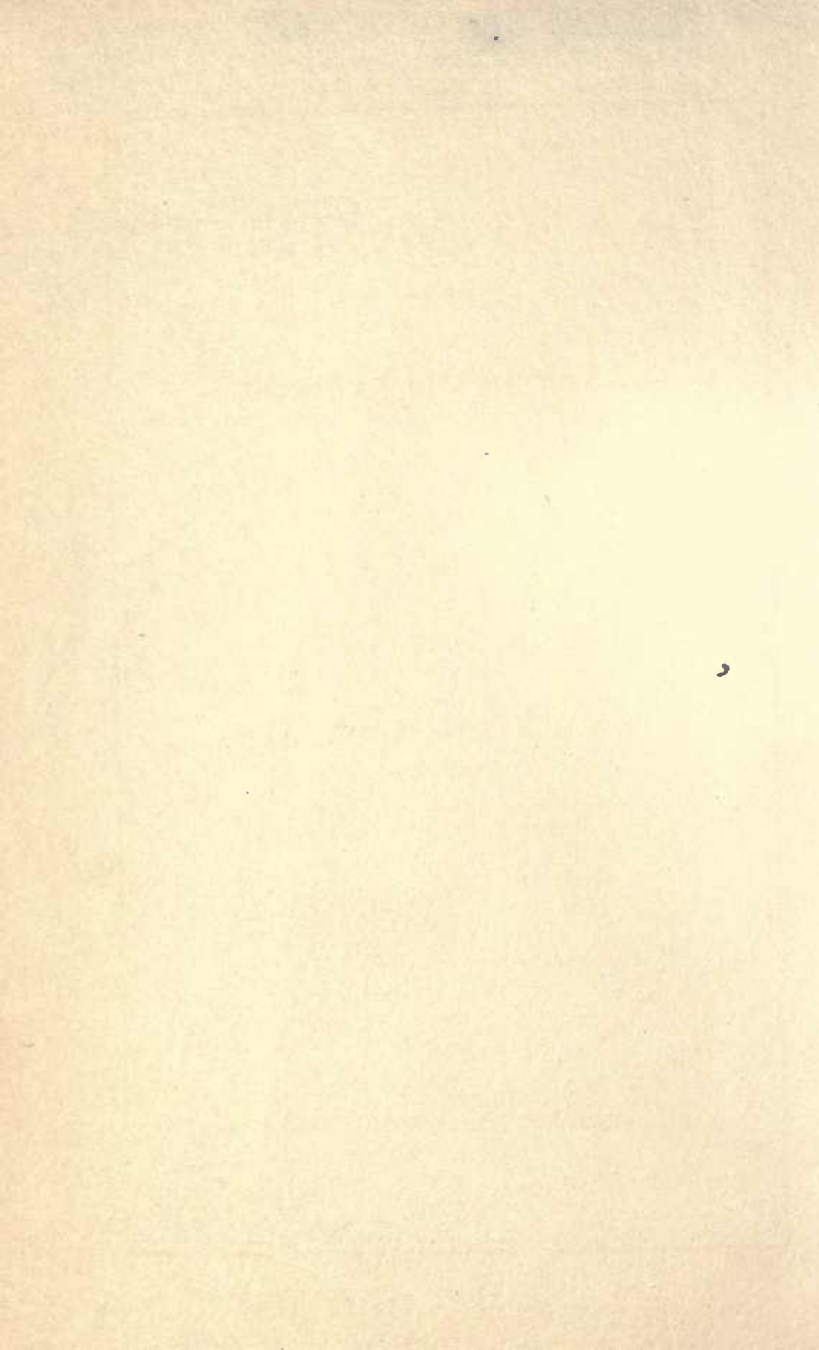


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GRANDMOTHER



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A Tale of Old Kentucky

BY

Sue Froman Matthews

SUE FROMAN MATTHEWS,

AUTHOR OF

"Sic Vita Est," a semi-religious story.

"A Beggar's Story," a tale for children.

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To
The Eggleston Club,
Vevay, Indiana,
This Book
Is
Affectionately Dedicated.

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Mine is a time of peace, and there
is Grace to be had ;
And God, not man, is the Judge of
us all when life shall cease ;
And in this Book, little Annie,
the message is one of Peace.

“The Grandmother”—TENNYSON.

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GRANDMOTHER.

CHAPTER I

UNCLE HENRY.

"Marse John! Marse John! Ain't this hole deep 'nough? We got t' get it done 'fore the cock crows. . . . My! this iron box is powerful heavy. Can't you lift that end, Marse John? . . . My back is 'most broke, diggin', diggin', diggin' . . . O, Marse John!"

"Uncle Henry, keep quiet and listen to me. You have so much fever that you do not know what you are saying. Mr. John has been dead a long time. The pain in your back is caused by your illness."

The old negro looked at his mistress with a glimmer of intelligence.

"Do you understand me, Uncle Henry?" she continued. "You are better to-day, and, if you'll lie still and sleep, you'll get well. Don't talk about things that are buried with the past."

"Buried! Sure, Miss Laura. We got it buried. . . . The smooth ground and green sod over it. . . . Just when I looked up over the big hill, there came the sun, a blazin' away at us. I thought it was the eye of the Lord."

"Hush! hush, Uncle Henry. Take this powder and try to sleep. The Lord willing, your mind will be clear in the morning."

She gave him an opiate and quietly left the room. She closed the door, locked it on the outside, and put the key in her pocket. There was stillness throughout the house, save the voice of the sick man, who continued to murmur unintelligible words, until he fell asleep, saying, "D. V.—D. V."

Mrs. Falconer wandered through the rooms in search of the children, smiling sadly as she recalled the days when the old-fashioned home was crowded with inmates. Then, some one merrily dubbed the place, Finden, because there were many cozy corners where young people could hide for confidential tête-a-têtes. A part of this old Kentucky dwelling was built before the advent of nails, when the roof was made of walnut clapboards fastened with walnut pegs. Then, as the land around was cleared and cultivated and the family increased, rooms were added and improvements made until it grew into its present form. It might now be likened to an immense carpenter's square. The front parlor, the main hall, the family sitting-room, the "white-help" dining-room, and the negro quarters faced the south. The back parlor, the library, and Grandmother's room looked toward the west. Inside the square on which the doors of the three west rooms opened was a veranda fourteen by forty-six feet. At right angles to this was the family dining-hall, and beyond, pantries, et cetera. The second story followed the same plan. The front yard sloped down to a little brook that skirted the base of a range of high hills and found its way to the Ohio River. On the west side, the rolling ground terminated in a grove of trees of various kinds.

Finding no one in the house, Mrs. Falconer went out to the end of the veranda and stood looking over the grove, for a moment, forgetful of the children of whom she was in search. Her thoughts were filled with misgivings concerning the faithful

old servant whose life was so mysteriously linked with her own. Her years had passed the half-century mark. Her form, stately and supple, her hair, golden and luxurious, her complexion, soft and fair, were as pleasing to behold as, when a girl of sixteen, she was called the belle of the country. But silver threads among the gold, the character sketches on the face, and the impenetrable depths of the dark eyes revealed the beauties of an individuality that had passed through great tribulation and come out refined and pure.

A scream and a merry ripple of laughter attracted her attention, and a gentle smile spread over her face—a rare expression, seen only in the countenances of those in whose hearts grandchildren have a home. She walked down to the grove. A cool breeze was blowing from the river, and it caressingly tossed about the leaves of a large poplar-tree, whose silver linings reminded her of frolicsome faces. As she drew near, she saw with surprise the smiling face of her ten-year-old granddaughter peeking at her from the heart of the tree. On the ground beneath were two boys. One, a handsome, brown-eyed fellow of twelve years, was laughing and pleading with the girl to come down from her perch. The other, also twelve years old, was impatiently digging a hole in the soft earth. At sight of the newly overturned sod, Mrs. Falconer's smile disappeared.

"My dear, what are you doing?" she asked.

The boy looked up, surprised by the tremor in his grandmother's voice, and replied, "Making a cave for our gold."

"If you are going to play robbers again, find a hiding-place under some other tree. I don't want you ever to dig here," she stated positively.

"All right, Grandmother; we won't need to play robbers if Sister will come down out of the tree till

we get things fixed," said Ralph, throwing down his spade.

"We'll fill up the hole and put the sod back, Grandmother," Russell promised, accompanying his words with the work.

They had built a house in the tree, where the large boughs extended almost parallel with the ground. Some new boards formed the floor, green branches the roof, and a light ladder the means of ascent. Varena was now in possession, with the ladder drawn up beside her. She sat on a limb, swinging her feet back and forth, while she coolly disengaged her long curls from the twigs, around which the wind had fastened them.

"You will fall over backward, Varena, if you're not careful," Mrs. Falconer cautioned.

"And be hung by the hair, as Absalom was," laughed Ralph.

"What were you making up in the tree?" asked the grandmother.

"That funny little building," began Russell, pointing to the house, "where that little queen has undisputed possession——"

"But it is disputed," Ralph interrupted.

"Any way," continued Russell, "that wonderful house is the World's Palace. The ground, all around the grove, is the 'three-fourths water of the globe,' and the trees are the different nations. That tall acorn-tree is England."

"That's not an acorn," Ralph corrected.

"O well," continued Russell, "it has to be. You know, Grandmother, an oak is hard and strong and long-lived. Then, you see, those three small trees are just in the position to be Scotland, Ireland, and Wales."

"Then, all together, you would call it, what?" questioned Mrs. Falconer.

"The British Isles," Varena responded.

"Good for you, little Sister. Now, come down from the tree," begged Ralph.

"That black-looking tree yonder is Africa. That yellow pine is China, and this cherry tree is Japan," Russell explained.

"What do you call the big sycamore tree?" asked Mrs. Falconer.

"Russia. The black-walnut is Turkey. The little birch tree is Switzerland. The maple tree is France. That evergreen is Italy," continued Russell, conscious of the pleasure he was giving his grandmother, in making practical application of the lessons they had learned, for she was their only teacher.

"But where is the United States?" asked Mrs. Falconer.

"O, didn't we tell you? That red-wood tree. It says in our geography that Sequoia is shipped to all parts of the world. It is of great value to every nation, that's why we call it the United States," explained Russell.

"But we had to give up trying to hold a World's Conference," complained Ralph, "because Sister wouldn't play unless she could be treasurer. Then I said we would play 'Robbers.' Then, Sister pulled the ladder up and wouldn't do anything. Now, she's laughing at us. Make her play fair, Grandmother, won't you?"

"It is almost time for your study-hour, and Varena must practise her music; so we shall go to the house and talk of the peace quarrel later," said Mrs. Falconer.

"Why, Grandmother!" called Varena, from the tree, "You said we need not have any lessons until Uncle Henry was better."

"We'll not have lessons; but you can study and practise. Come, dear."

Russell helped lower the ladder and held it while Varena came down.

When Mrs. Falconer was left a widow by the death of her husband, the minister, she retired from active church-work and came back to Kentucky, to reside with her only daughter, who was married and living in the old homestead. In the midst of the complications of an extraordinary mystery, her son-in-law was taken away; and, in less than a year, her daughter died, leaving the little girl baby and the two boys to the tender care of their grandmother. She faithfully and conscientiously devoted her life to the orphans; for she was thoroughly capable of being all things to them. When they attained to the age of school-children she began with their lessons, and, as the presence of a governess was undesirable, she purposed continuing their instructions until they were able to enter a high school or college. That which once had been the sitting-room of their great-grandfather's family, was now their school-room. Old-fashioned portraits of ancestors hung above the fireplace. Steel engravings, of Plockhorst's "Christ Blessing Little Children," Hofmann's "Among the Doctors," and Paul Thuman's "Psyche at Nature's Mirror," covered the wall between the front windows. Above the old Steinway, the familiar faces of Beethoven, Bach, Handel, Liszt, Mendelssohn, Mozart, Schubert and Schumann were grouped. Near the bookcase, were portraits of Longfellow, Whittier, Gladstone, and Spurgeon. In one corner, a what-not was filled with statuettes, rare vases, shells, and curios. About every article the children were conversant; but that which engaged their attention daily was Webster's Unabridged Dictionary. It occupied the center of the schoolroom. Ralph called it "Grandmother's hobby-horse"; for she required the children and servants to use proper words and to pronounce cor-

rectly; and she was proud of being one of the comparatively few Southern women who trained their servants to speak the language of the mistress, instead of permitting the dialect of the darkies. In this atmosphere of purity and refinement and aristocratic conservatism, Russell, Ralph, and Varena Farnam were being developed.

After they had come in from the grove and taken up the duties of the hour, Mrs. Falconer slipped away to the room of the sick man. She found Uncle Henry awake and delirious. Calling a servant, she sent him to town with instructions to bring the old family physician, and no one else.

An hour later Varena fretted: "I've learned my lessons, Grandmother, and I've practised; but, now, we can't go and play in the big tree because it rains."

"Did you get the little Chopin waltz committed?"

"Yes'm; I played without looking at the notes."

"Did you use the metronome?"

"No, Grandmother; it goes too fast."

"Be patient, dear, and you will get it up to presto before long. Go call the boys and come out on the veranda, and we shall watch it rain and play games," said Mrs. Falconer.

Seated on the broad veranda, where rich, heavy curtains, suspended from old-fashioned windows, formed the background, where rafters of unfinished timber made an artistic ceiling, and an immense crimson Rambler in full bloom shaded an old arm-chair, Mrs. Falconer and her three wards made a picture that would have delighted the eyes of the domestic artist, Millet, or, with the misty rain, would have charmed the sombre Corot.

"What shall we play?" asked Mrs. Falconer.

"Bible game," Ralph suggested.

"Now, when I call a letter of the alphabet, the one who calls the name of a Bible character beginning with that letter, scores one. Ten is the game.

Remember the sacred names must not be used," admonished Mrs. Falconer.

"All right. Go ahead, Grandmother," Russell urged.

"B," said Mrs. Falconer.

"Beelzebub," Baal," "Bethel," all came at once.

"How can I mark the score when you all begin at once?"

"Baal was the shortest and I was done first," Ralph declared.

"Well, one for Ralph. G," said Mrs. Falconer.

"Goliath," "Gabriel," "Gulliver."

"Ha-ha-ha, Sister, you are out. Gulliver's not in the Bible," laughed Ralph.

"I know it," Varena answered; "but it was all I could think of."

"D," called Mrs. Falconer.

"Daniel," "Deuteronomy," "Devil."

Daniel scored for Russell.

"W," said Mrs. Falconer.

"That isn't fair, Grandmother. You know there are no proper names in the Bible that begin with W," Ralph objected.

"Is Devil a proper name?" asked Russell.

"I suppose you would call it an improper name. Any way, I didn't score on it," answered Ralph.

"H," was called.

"Hiram," "Haman," "Hannah."

"Don't yell so loud, Varena," said Ralph, "Grandmother isn't deaf."

The game was continued until Russell had won ten points. Then, cities were made the test; next presidents, kings, and queens. While it was a jolly frolic, it also quickened the memory and sharpened the wit.

"Now, Grandmother, tell us a true story, please," Russell entreated.

"Shall I tell you about the little child your Grandfather baptized?"

"The one who put his hand in the water and sprinkled some on Grandfather's head?" asked Varena.

"No; this was in another place," said Mrs. Falconer. "It was communion day, in a beautiful church full of people. The organist was improvising softly and sweetly, around the old tune, 'When he cometh to make up his jewels.' The elders were seated before the sacramental table. At a sign from the minister, an elegantly dressed lady and her husband came forward, bringing a little child, perhaps three years old; daintily dressed in a kilt suit, wide sash, white shoes, and silk hose. Your grandfather leaned forward, and the child's name was whispered to him. Then, he baptized 'Jessie.' As he was praying that the parents might be enabled to train up their beloved little girl in the way she should go, the child spoke out in a clear, abused voice, saying: 'I am a boy!'"

Ralph rolled over on the floor and yelled, Russell smiled in his quiet, amused manner, while Varena, failing to see the point, became the target of her brothers' badinage. Mrs. Falconer looked at her watch and hastened to Uncle Henry's room to administer his medicine and attend to his evening meal.

The days passed slowly. The sick negro, suffering with malarial fever, was alternately better and worse. The duties of the household, the care and instruction of the children, the supervision of the affairs of the farm, with the surveillance of the sick-room, were relaxing the elasticity of the steps and deepening the unselfish furrows of the kind face of the grandmother, and proving deleterious to her constitution.

"Grandmother, why do you do all the work for Uncle Henry? You can make Jim take care of him. If you're afraid he will forget the medicine, let me do it, please, and you lie down and rest. Won't you, Grandmother?" urged Russell.

"You must not neglect your studies, dear," she made excuse.

"I can take my books and study in his room," he argued.

"And get the fever. Then where could I find rest?" and she smiled into the boy's earnest eyes.

"I'm so strong and well, and you look so tired. Please, Grandmother." He put his arm around her neck, and did not try to conceal the tears that pleaded for him.

"Russell, Uncle Henry is more to me than a faithful old servant. We were born in the same year, cradled by the same nurse. When we were grown-up children, my father promised to give Henry to me as a wedding-present. He was very proud of that, and was my most devoted slave. My horse and buggy were always at my service; my skirts were brushed, my shoes cleaned. In fact, he would neglect everything else to see that 'Miss Laura's wishes were gratified.'"

"I heard him tell Ralph that he used to be mean to you," Russell intimated.

"Well, he wasn't," insisted Mrs. Falconer. "I know to what he referred. He disliked to churn, and that was his regular job Saturday mornings. In the fall, when papaws were ripe—and I was very fond of them—he would get the churn back of the kitchen where mother could not see, and then induce me to churn while he went to get papaws for me. Years after, he told me that he always procured the papaws the night before, when he went after the cows, so he could get behind a rose-bush

and sleep till the butter came. There was nothing very mean in that."

"Did you ever see anything mean in what anybody did?" Russell suggested.

"When Lincoln's proclamation to free the negroes was sent through the South," continued Mrs. Falconer, "Henry insisted that he could not accept his freedom because he was honor-bound to be my wedding present,"

"He has always lived here; so you didn't take him when you were married," put in Russell.

"I married a minister and we went North and West, and I could not keep a colored man in the family. When we came home on our annual visits, he was here to wait on us; and, when my beloved daughter came here to live and take care of her grandparents, he was as faithful to her as he would have been to me."

"Grandmother, did mamma marry your old sweetheart?" asked Ralph, coming into the room and hearing part of the conversation.

"Well, yes, dear. In the Kentucky sense of the word I suppose he was an old sweetheart of mine," replied Mrs. Falconer.

"That is the novelty part of Kentucky. When a man doesn't get the girl he loves, he waits and marries her daughter. I'll bet you had a lot of sweethearts, Grandmother. I wish papa and mamma and grandfather and great-grandfather and great-grandmother were all here. Wouldn't we have a house full of nice people," gushed Ralph, looking at the portraits.

"I wish I could share the responsibility of you three orphans with some of your parents," and Mrs. Falconer became serious.

"We are nearly thirteen years old, and you expect us to be ready for college in a few years; but

I would rather be more help to you than to study and practise all the time," said Russell.

"Don't worry about me. You do more than your share as it is; for you do what Ralph leaves undone," Mrs. Falconer replied.

"Grandmother, you know I'm too much of a Kentucky gentleman to like to work," laughed Ralph. "Russell is the new South; I'm the old."

"Your father was one of the best men I ever knew," began Mrs. Falconer, "and your mother——"

"The most beautiful," Ralph interrupted.

"She was very pretty," continued Mrs. Falconer, "but not so beautiful as Mabel Murratt, a young lady who united with our church when we lived in the city of Louiston. Mabel made a great pet of your mamma, who was then a young girl. I have been reminded of her often by an expression in Russell's eyes; and, as he grows older, that little dimpling around the lips is even more like her."

"O Grandmother, come quick and look at the sky," Varena called, from the hall door.

"The aurora borealis. Isn't it fine?" exclaimed Russell.

It was about eight o'clock in the evening, and the auroral display was beautiful and sublime. Such phenomena were seen rarely in this latitude. There were faint tinges of colored lights; and not alone the usual brilliant streams toward the zenith, but shimmering, cloudlike masses of light would float upward and fade away in upper space with almost the rapidity of sheet lightning. Then, again, sombre, shadowy banks of darkness would appear in the northern horizon, rise upward like a huge mountain-cloud, and, around its edges, a brilliant auroral coloring would burst forth, from which there appeared to be dashed upward fleecy snow-drifts, of the brightness of the moon. Suddenly, the dark mass

would be divided by streams of light, seeming to form in the zenith a grand dome of the heavens. This, fading away, would again be succeeded by the shimmering light and electric clouds, and the dark mass again settle back to the horizon like a huge mountain promontory in the sea.

"One could readily imagine the scene of creation was being re-enacted," said Mrs. Falconer, "that God was separating the light from the darkness in the creation of the new world."

"Are the other worlds inhabited?" Ralph asked.

"They may be," replied Russell. "Don't you remember the legend that told how the Creator made a hundred worlds and only one of them fell away in sin, and Christ died to save it; and the angels in heaven rejoiced more over it than over the ninety and nine just ones that were never lost?"

Their evening prayers were said on the veranda in the atmosphere of God's world of wonders, and Morpheus peopled their dreams with angelic beings floating in space.

After weeks of convalescence, Uncle Henry was able to sit in his chair out on the lawn, greatly to the delight of the children. Varena sang to him and read to him, gathered flowers and crowned him, and made her white Eskimo dog, Flash, perform for his amusement, and her kitten go to sleep in his lap. The boys reported to him concerning the farm, all that Jim had done and more that he had left undone. They felt as if life would begin anew when Uncle Henry, who had superintended the place for two generations, was at the helm again.

The old negro had made up his mind that Russell was to take charge when his labors were over. To-day, as he contemplated the boys, he said:

"Grandmother, you'll have to send Ralph to the city when he is old 'nough. He will make a good banker. That investment down at Harlam, Tenn.,

is just the thing for him. He is first-rate at figres. It takes brains to be a farmer, and Russell must stay here and keep care of you."

"There will be several years before we decide about that. I expect to depend on you for a long time yet, Uncle Henry," Mrs. Falconer replied.

"I'm afraid I've got to go. D. V., Grandmother. All the while I was sick, I could hear a voice calling to me: 'Go seek—D. V., go seek.' And I said: 'Give me back my strength, Lord, and I'll go.' I can't go back on my promise to the Lord, Miss Laura," pleaded the colored man.

"You're not well, yet, Henry. I shall send Russell to read to you. Then, you had better go back to bed before you get too tired."

Russell came out and was requested to read the twentieth chapter of II Kings, the story of Hezekiah.

"I read that to you yesterday," said Russell.

"I want to hear it again, 'cause it is just my case. Do you think I'd be sitting here getting well if Grandmother hadn't prayed for me? Just like Hezekiah, I turned my face to the wall and wept, and, sure, Marse Russell, sure, my life is len'thened fifteen years," averred Henry, fixing a searching, questioning gaze on the face of the boy. "She prays, I work. Some day, D. V.!" He dropped his head on his chest and listened to the reading of the Scripture.

CHAPTER II.

VARENA.

Two years have passed. It is the season of berry-picking. There is a point on top of the hills back of Finden, from which can be seen the towns eight and twenty miles distant. To the west, the Ohio River winds in and out among its picturesque hills and valleys. The luxuriant tobacco-fields glow richly in the noonday sun; the herds of cattle, satisfied with the morning's grazing, peacefully chew their cud in the shade of the locust-trees that cluster on the hillside; flocks of sheep nibble at the roots of grass, or pant in the warmth of the summer heat; the squirrels flit from tree to tree, and the birds carol to their mates.

Early in the morning, Varena Farnam and Jennie, the housemaid, laden with baskets of edibles, rode up the hill on old Mazeppa. Russell, Ralph, and Jim, the chore-boy, walked up and carried empty pails. A grassy plot, under a shady maple-tree on the summit of the high hill, was chosen as the place for the picnic dinner. A few hours of industry and all the buckets were filled with luscious, ripe blackberries. Then, while Jim was building a little furnace to boil the coffee and Jennie was spreading the dinner, Russell and Ralph stretched themselves on the grass for a snooze. Varena wandered away through the woods. She loved to talk to the trees, and imagine they nodded in assent, or shook in disapproval; she delighted in mimicking the birds, or in trying to teach them a new note; and she was

happy in gathering wild flowers and chasing the squirrels. She followed a tiny brown fellow down through a ravine and up to a large tree that stood out alone on the top of an adjoining hill.

By the time dinner was ready, the boys were ravenously hungry; for their appetites were sharpened by the aroma of coffee, the odor of fried chicken, the smell of fruit, and the stimulus of fresh-air exercise. As their sister had not returned, they started in opposite directions to seek her.

"Varena! Varena!" called Ralph, as he sought her through the forest. "If you are hid and want us to find you, please show up till after dinner. I'm too hungry to play hide-and-seek now." Cheerfully, he hunted, in the bushes, behind the logs, and under the leaves, without success. Again, he called, "Varena! Varena!"

A gay ripple of laughter floated down to him from above. He looked up and saw his sister silhouetted against the sky, in the top of a large tree that stood alone on the opposite side of the ravine. One foot was resting on a bough, the other, swinging; one hand was holding to a branch, and with the other, she threw kisses at him, saying:

"I am going to be a dryad and live in this tree. Ha, ha! You can't get me, this is my tree."

"O Varena," cried Ralph, "you venturesome girl! You'll fall and get killed." He was so distressed, he clenched his hands and held his breath, wondering what had become of Russell, who always knew the right thing to do in an emergency. "No, Sister; don't try to come down. If you move, you'll fall. I'll climb up and help you."

She laughed merrily, saying: "I can climb where I please. If you cross the ravine, I'll jump. O, it's glorious up here."

But she swung her foot a little too far: she lost her balance, the twig snapped in her hand, and she

came crashing through the branches. Ralph was on the spot in a moment, and, to his surprise, he found Russell lying on the ground unconscious, and Varena bending over him.

"I've killed him! I've killed him!" cried the girl.

"He will be all right in a minute," Ralph consoled. "It takes more than a tumble to knock Russell out."

"I saw him over the hill," continued Varena; "but I didn't think he could see me. He must have come up behind the bushes and got here just as I fell. Why don't you do something, Ralph?"

"His heart is all right. Hello! Russell, wake up." They lifted him to an upright position and he opened his eyes.

"Are you hurt?" asked Varena.

"No. Are you?" Russell returned.

"The dryads pulled my hair awfully," said Varena, arranging her curls; "but I'm glad you're not hurt. Why didn't you get out of the way?"

"Because I wanted to break your fall. I didn't know that your knees are like two baseballs," replied Russell, smiling.

"If you are both all right, let's hie away to dinner. I'm hungry," Ralph suggested.

The meal proved enjoyable, notwithstanding this little episode, though Varena appeared less frolicsome than she had been in the morning. A few original jokes and trite conundrums kept the spirit of mirth awake until the conversation drifted into the more serious contemplation of the prospect of college life.

"It will be lonely for you, Sister, when we go to the university this fall," Russell suggested.

"You will have a jollier time in town than you would going with us, Sister," averred Ralph, soothingly.

"If I went with you, Grandmother would be lone-

some," Varena replied, softly. "And I'm not going to town either until I can start in the high school. I'd rather study at home."

"Two years in the preparatory and four in college is a long time to keep studying," groaned Ralph. "And what's the use of it? I'm a natural-born gentleman of the old Kentucky type, and I intend to take life easy."

"You have to be a banker," Varena declared.

"So Grandmother says. You don't like to work on the farm any better than I do, Russ. Do you?"

"I don't object to the farm; but I would like to live in a large city for a while. I'd like to travel, and see the skyscrapers and monuments, and big union stations, and large libraries and museums and zoological gardens. Life in a city must be always interesting, never monotonous. There you can hear fine lectures and beautiful music," said Russell, with enthusiasm.

"And spend a lot of money," laughed Ralph. "What would you like, Sister?"

"I'd love to sing and play and paint and be——"

"Be what?" teased Ralph. "Grandmother says 'a woman's highest mission is to be a good man's faithful wife!'"

Her eyes shone with a deeper blue as she winked the tears away, and said softly, "Be always good, just like Grandmother."

"You needn't cry, Pet," said Ralph. "Nobody on earth can be as good as Grandmother." There was a very tender chord vibrating in his heart when he called his sister Pet. He caught her in his arms and carried her to a pile of hay, saying: "Mighty few fellows know what it is to have our grandmother. I believe Mamma was just like her. Don't you, Pet?"

"Let me go, Ralph. Mamma used to ride old

Mazeppa," she replied, pulling away from her brother and going to where the horse was making his dinner off the savory grass. She put her arms around his neck, and petted and talked to him, until preparations to start home were completed.

Jennie was put on the old family horse with the hamper of picnic remnants in front of her; Varena on behind her, back to back, insisted on having the largest bucket of berries. This, she balanced on old Mazeppa's rump, and the procession started down the hill through the woods. They followed a sheep path that zigzagged under the trees, making the descent easier for the horse. Ralph lingered behind, in order to take a short cut down the steep hill and meet them as they came out into the open pasture.

Suddenly, their idle prattle was hushed by an unearthly yell; and, looking up the hill, they saw Ralph spring into the air, above the brush and briers, and sail toward them like a flying-machine. He compassed a distance of twenty or thirty feet, struck the ground with his heels, rolled over his pail of berries, and arose with a pale face, and staring eyes, and a red shirt.

"What's the matter? Marse Ralph, you look like you had had a fight with the old boy hi'self," said Jim, running to his aid.

In racing down the hill, Ralph had almost run on an enormous snake, coiled ready to strike. Owing to the speed with which he was moving, he was unable to stop; and, with great presence of mind, he gave a tremendous leap, landing on his heels and rolling over his bucket of berries.

In the excitement over Ralph, Jennie rode under a tree, and, lifting a limb to pass it back over their heads, miscalculated, and it came down between them and gracefully pushed Varena and her bucket

off the tail of the horse, spilling the berries over the grass. It was so neatly done, they all roared with laughter.

While the boys were picking up as many of the berries as were not crushed or soiled, Varena took a handful of fruit and strayed toward a flock of sheep to see if they would eat from her hand. She was a great lover of animals and had no fear of them; consequently, she was wofully surprised when a big buck sheep came fiercely toward her. She was standing above him on the hillside, and did not comprehend his evil design until his head went between her knees. Her skirts caught over his head, blinding and frightening him so that he whirled, and away he ran, with her on top of him, down the hill, over the brook, up the ravine. She clung to him, crying and laughing, her curls flying, her large eyes staring, afraid to let go and tumble lest he turn and stamp her. She enjoyed the joke on the sheep, for she believed the boys would rescue her.

Ralph's nerves were completely unstrung by his narrow escape from the venomous snake; so that, when he saw his sister a second time in danger of her life, he could only sink to the ground, pointing toward her, saying, "O Russ!"

Russell gazed at the queer object racing around the field several minutes before he realized what it was. Then, he was after them like the wind.

"Don't let go till I say when," he called.

The sheep circled and he made a spring and missed them. Varena laughed faintly; she was losing her strength, though not her courage. The second time the buck circled near Russell, he called, "Now!" and caught her in his left arm, and, with the right, struck the sheep with a club that he never knew where, or how, he got possession of. The old leader of the herd was too frightened to wage battle,

but shook himself and scampered up the hill to where his companions stood watching him in meek wonder.

When Varena had recovered from a spell of hysterical laughter, she was placed on the horse behind Jennie, and the procession again headed for home. Supper was ready and Mrs. Falconer anxiously waiting when the dishevelled, besmeared company, with their depleted pails, appeared. After the grandmother was assured that no bones were broken, or injuries sustained, they were sent to the bathroom to prepare for the evening meal. Their appetites had been satiated with berries, and, though they occupied their accustomed seats at the table, the food was neglected in the more enjoyable excitement of recounting the events of the day.

"An ancestor of this same sheep," said Mrs. Falconer, "once played a serious trick on your great-grandfather. He had an artist friend, who was here making sketches of the different views. They had walked down to the creek, below the little falls where the water is several feet deep, and were standing on the bank with their backs toward the brook. Father was commenting on the beauties of the landscape, pointing with pride at the rustling corn-field, and waving his hand over the broad meadow. He was unaware of the approach of the sheep, which evidently interpreted his gesticulations as a banter, and, in a quick rush, struck him square in the stomach and landed him in the pond. The painter was so frightened, he climbed up on the stone pier and yelled like a schoolboy. Uncle Henry went to the rescue. He found father unconscious. All that had saved him from drowning was the fact that his head rested on a large boulder."

"Was it the sheep that knocked him senseless, or the stone?" asked Varena.

"Both, perhaps," Mrs. Falconer replied.

"Where is Uncle Henry now?" questioned Ralph.

"Porter on the packet," stated Mrs. Falconer, reservedly.

"Does he like to work on the boats?" asked Varena.

"I think he will come home when he gets tired," answered Grandmother.

"I wish he were here to help weed my pansy bed. They are such beauties."

Varena left the table, and, later, came out on the veranda with her hands full of her favorite flowers; little yellow faces, brown beauties, black, white, and variegated blossoms.

Pressing them to her lips, she said: "'Pansies are for thoughts, my dear.'" She dropped them in her Grandmother's lap, and, drawing a stool up in front of her, sat down to arrange them artistically, saying: "They always make me think of mamma. When I was a very little girl, you used to tell me how my mamma loved to creep out to the pansy bed, and coo and prattle to the pretty faces, and, once, she was scared at a big brown pansy, because it looked like the face of a bulldog. Look there, Grandmother, isn't that like Jack Lindley's dog?" She held up the blossom, smiling at the queer resemblance.

"When the boys come out, I will tell you an experience I had, in those days when your mamma loved to talk to the flowers," said Mrs. Falconer.

"We're here, Grandmother," Ralph cried, throwing himself along the settee, while Russell ensconced himself in a rocker.

"We were living in Michigan, not far from an Indian reservation. About two years before, the Gypsies or Indians had stolen a white child, and the horror of it was still fresh in the minds of the

people. One Thursday afternoon, your mamma, dressed in a dainty white dress, with a gold chain around her neck, and her curls tied back with a bright blue ribbon, which made her appear remarkably beautiful, sat by her pansy bed, singing and talking to the flowers. A well-dressed stranger walked past the gate and stopped. Leaning on the fence, he watched the child for some time, then went away. In about an hour he came back. This time I was sitting where I could get a better view of his face, and I did not like it, though his evident admiration of my baby was gratifying to my vanity. He passed back and forth half a dozen times, fascinated by the child. However, we went in to supper, after which I gave her a bath and put her to bed in her cradle down stairs in my room.

"Our church was on the corner, with a large yard between it and the parsonage. When the last bell rang for prayer-meeting, I called to Anna, the servant girl, to come stay with Rolette till I came home. As I went into the church door, I glanced back and saw that the light was still burning in Anna's room, and I knew that she had not gone down. Many of the people were in their seats, and I went to the organ and played the first hymn. Then, your grandfather read a whole chapter from the Scriptures. Truly, I think it was the longest one in the Bible, and I did not hear a word of it. First, I began to imagine Anna up-stairs reading her novel; then, I could just see that old Gypsy stealing in and carrying off my baby. I was hoping that a young girl, who sometimes played the organ for me, would come in, and I could slip out without subjecting the service to any interruption or annoyance. She did not come, and your grandfather began to pray; I am sure he never left any corner of the globe unprayed for that night. He had no knowledge of the agony that I was suffering, picturing my beauti-

ful baby miles and miles away in the dense forest that spreads through northern Michigan, yet not daring to disturb the service, for, in that Holland community, they had once let their town burn up, rather than break up the religious worship. We were anticipating a protracted meeting; and, full of the Spirit, your grandfather prayed for our church and all the churches in the town, the Sunday-schools and Endeavor Society, the League and the B. Y. P. U.; the Presbytery and Conference and Association; the State, the General Assembly, and the President and ruling officers of Church and State; the missionary fields; Persia, India, Morocco, Kongo, Korea, China, Japan, Cuba, Brazil, Dutch Guiana, Boliva, Venezuela; then up again to Russia, Siberia, Poland, Burma; then back to Salt Lake and the Mormons; and he even dropped down here to old Kentucky, and prayed for the mountain whites and the freedmen. Such an agonizing of soul as I went through, none but a mother can know."

"O hurry up, Grandmother," urged Ralph. "Did the Gypsy get mamma? If he did, you rescued her, else we wouldn't be here now."

"Well, your grandfather did finally say 'amen,' and I motioned to Genevieve, who had come in, to come to the organ, and I started for home. I had grown so pale under the suspense I was enduring that the folks thought I must be very sick, and three or four of the ladies started out after me. Their husbands, fearing I was about to faint and would need their strength to carry me home, followed their wives. Of course, everybody's thoughts were with us, and the meeting was fairly at an end. I rushed into my room, and there sat Anna by the side of the cradle, reading her novel and the baby sleeping as sweet as any cherub."

"Good gracious, Grandmother! I'll bet you felt ashamed to go back and meet the prayer-meeting

crowd that was coming after you," Ralph exclaimed.

"I shall never forget the expression of disgust on the face of one old elder, when, in answer to his query, 'What is the matter, Mrs. Falconer?' I replied: 'I was afraid somebody had stolen my baby.' "

The old homestead, where books and music were conned under Mrs. Falconer's careful supervising, the fields and flowers, hills and woodland, where they hunted and played, the river in which they learned to swim and to boat, were not all the influences that had part in the development of the characters of the orphans. The village church and Sunday-school were essential elements in the inculcating of a spirit of reverence for religion and sacred things; and their social life was limited to Sunday-school picnics and an occasional birthday party. But Varena built many air-castles about the lovely times she would have when she was a young lady. She did not care anything about boys now; she simply wanted to run wild and romp and play and practise; but, some time, she would have sweethearts galore. For the present, her heart was content in her love for Grandmother and her pleasure in her music. Whatever she enjoyed in nature, she found in her music. She played little selections from Haydn's "Seasons." In one, she was sure she could hear the wind teasing the leaves on the trees; and in "A Lowly Cottage," she could hear a child singing a tune to the accompaniment of a boiling tea-kettle. In Mendelssohn's "Songs Without Words, No. 38" she could hear a mermaid singing, as she sat by the river's brink and tossed pebbles into the water. When she was studying "Consolation," her Grandmother told her that she had somewhere read, that Mendelssohn was inspired to write "Consolation" by overhearing a conversation between a saintly old lady and a beautiful girl. The girl was troubled and impatient over

some of her love affairs, and, when she would try to relieve her heart by giving her confidence to the old lady, she received for reply each time, the one soft, consoling strain.

"Will it be that way with us, Grandmother, when I am grown up? Shall I have lots of lovers, who will make trouble, and I'll come and tell you and be comforted?" asked Varena.

"I hope you may never have any trouble, dear, and just one true lover," Mrs. Falconer replied.

"O that wouldn't be any fun. I want to be terribly heartbroken and miserable, not knowing which one I love best. Of course, they will all love me. Don't you think so, Grandmother?" asked the child.

"Your future may be very different from what you imagine," said Mrs. Falconer. "Come, play your favorite for me and I shall rest and listen."

"I'll play 'Cabaletta,' Do you know 'Cabaletta' is the Italian for a little horse, Grandmother? Now listen and you can hear the feet of the little Shetland pony clatter over the street paved with asphalt." The child was filled with ecstasy over the sound of the little feet that she could so perfectly mimic on the piano.

Ralph's musical qualification was limited to a good tenor voice, which he used as a member of the village choir. Russell was a natural-born musician, and, at the end of four years he had gone beyond his teacher. His grasp of technique and comprehension of the soul of music, his insight into the mind of the composer, and his power of interpretation were remarkable. His ability to improvise made him an admirable organist. He played for church services in the town and arranged to pay part of his college expenses by playing for chapel exercises.

The time was approaching when the boys were to leave home for six years of boarding-school life. Varena was to continue her studies with her grand-

mother. The separation would be painful for all, but best in the end; for Mrs. Falconer felt that she could no longer do justice to the young men. Besides, it was necessary for them to come in contact with other minds and interests to broaden their capacity for usefulness. One great source of regret to Varena was in not having her brothers to go swimming with her.

Often, Mrs. Falconer, with her grandchildren and Jim and Jennie, and occasionally some of the neighbor boys and girls, would go down under the river bank, build a fire, swim and boat, and ride the waves of a passing steamer, dress in a little tent, eat supper on the beach, and go home to a happy, healthful night of slumbers. Varena could swim, dive, float, and tread water the same as the boys. They had taken more pleasure in training her than in performing feats themselves, and they were very proud of her water-sport ability. She had an occasion to reward their labors one evening in this last summer of their childhood; such it might be called for things never seemed quite the same, after the boys returned from college.

They were alone on the beach with Mrs. Falconer, when Russell and Ralph determined to swim across the river and back. They made the opposite shore very comfortably; but Ralph was so tired he was afraid to start back, and Russell, wishing to make the round trip, started to swim back and take the skiff over after his brother. He did not realize that he was winded, until he was near the Kentucky shore, where the water was very deep. Varena was paddling in the water, watching him with pride, and shaking her hand toward Ralph, as a vanquished swimmer when Russell disappeared so quickly she held her breath in surprise, watching here and there for his head to appear. He came up and down again; then, under she went after him. Mrs. Fal-

coner sprang into the little boat, secured the oars, and was soon out in the river and down below some distance, to be ready where the current would carry them. Seconds seemed minutes, and minutes hours, till the brave little girl came to the surface, pulling the boy with her. He appeared to have strangled and was black in the face. Varena caught hold of the boat with one hand and held on to Russell with the other. Mrs. Falconer was rowing for the shore when she heard a cry for help from Ralph. He had seen the trouble and started to swim to the rescue and was almost exhausted.

"Can you hold on, Varena, if I turn back for Ralph?" cried Mrs. Falconer.

The child nodded her head. She could not find her voice. Mrs. Falconer prayed and pulled. Ralph kept in sight till he grabbed the oar, then rested a moment, caught the side of the skiff, and soon had an arm around Russell.

"Get in yourself," said Varena. "I'm all right."

Ralph climbed in, and, together, they got Russell up and on the bottom of the boat. Varena would not let him take time to help her in, and he began working over his brother. He had seen boys resuscitated and knew what to do; and before they reached the shore, Russell opened his eyes. After all danger was passed Varena buried her face in her grandmother's lap and cried.

"Well, Grandmother," said Ralph, when they were able to start home, "'all things work together for good,' you say. Where do you find good in to-day's catastrophe?"

"Surely it is good that we are all alive, when I might have been deprived of all three of you at once. Since we are alive, I am glad it happened as it did. You boys have always wanted to swim the river. You are satisfied now, and I can feel at ease about you when you are away at school. This expe-

rience will be a lesson not soon forgotten. You will not run the risk again, especially where Varena is not near to save you."

"We owe our live to you, little Sister," said Russell.

"You all owe your preservation to Him who commanded 'the waves to be still,' " Mrs. Falconer corrected.

"Well, as Uncle Henry would say, I am 'powerful' thankful that we are pretty good swimmers," Ralph replied.

"Indeed, I am grateful to have escaped such a tragedy," said Mrs. Falconer.

"But it ended in comedy," laughed Ralph, "or tragicomic."

"With you children, the greater the danger, the more keenly you enjoy the sensation of recalling it. Not so with me; I can't allow any more swimming this fall. I can not think of the river without a feeling of dread, and yet of gratitude that the waters did not overwhelm my soul," Mrs. Falconer added.

CHAPTER III.

“Experience join’d to common sense,
To mortals is a Providence.”

The first two years of life spent at Danboro University were uneventful, as far as anything out of the ordinary occurring. Russell and Ralph Farnam matriculated as other students; and, being in the preparatory department, they were not subjected to very severe hazing. The blanket-tossing, pump-soaking and snipe-hunting were endured stoically and satisfied their comrades that they possessed sufficient grit to hold a place among them. Russell was the handsomer of the two boys, and perhaps the stronger character; and his position, as chapel organist, gave him advantages from which he could have profited; but his retiring disposition, his peculiar atmosphere of reserve and his dignified repelling of advances, cut him off from the social life of the institute. His conception of girls was like that of a beautiful picture, poem, or piece of music—something to be studied, analyzed and enjoyed as a thing apart. His letters to his grandmother contained descriptions of the town, the University buildings, the campus and groves along the little river, the country and huge mountains in the distance; character sketches of the professors, their work and idiosyncrasies. To Varena, he wrote of music, often interpreting a new piece for her, and always wishing she were with him in the enjoyment of some opera or oratorio. Ralph’s letters abounded in episodes, narrow escapes, and daring achievements.

He was gay, happy, and debonair, and popular with all classes. He was the beau-ideal of the girls at the Seminary, a paragon for the boys in the Academy, and a favorite with his instructors. However, the brothers seemed to progress equally well in their studies. At the end of each semester, they passed their examinations and were promoted; so, that, at the beginning of the third year, they entered college as regular freshmen.

It was at this period that Mrs. Falconer relegated to the garret the little desks and blackboard that had made the schoolroom at Finden a sacred place to her. Tender memories of childhood days clung round each tablet and book. Still, it was with pride that she saw her granddaughter mount her pony and ride into town to enter the village high school. Her advent created a sensation; for Varena Farnam, with the enthusiasm of a girl of fourteen, trained in the seclusion of a country home, where morality, gentility, and punctilious behavior formed an important item in the curriculum, was no small factor in a community. Under the new environments, her nature was aroused to an impetuous activity, and emotions that hitherto had lain dormant were quickened into being. The novelty of contact with a host of boys and girls added spice to her life; and her overflow of good-humored vivacity drew around her a coterie of the brightest scholars. She was ignorant of the admiration and envy that she excited, and abandoned herself to the full enjoyment of competition—proud of the accuracy with which her early training enabled her to grasp and solve her problems, and quick to rise to an emergency.

On one occasion, the duty of a recitation had been assigned to Varena as a part of the program for the Friday afternoon exercise. She simply forgot all about it. When her name was called, she looked

up for a moment, dazed. Then, intuitively divining that there was a desire on the part of some that she should fail, she drew down her forehead in anxious contemplation, and, the next instant, walked firmly up on the rostrum and repeated the longest rule in arithmetic. She spoke it perfectly, made a little courtesy, and returned to her seat. Some of the scholars giggled, but the majority applauded heartily. The principal of the school had taken a dislike to Varena, because she often solved a problem so readily that it placed him at a disadvantage; and he resolved to use this circumstance to her humiliation. The F. F. K.—as the Farnam family of Kentucky was called—was too influential for the child to be dealt with summarily; so it was not until the regular meeting that this audacious conduct was placed before the school board. The unpopular principal was deeply chagrined when it was decided that a comprehensive rendering of a rule in arithmetic or algebra is of more benefit to the pupil than the committing of simple rhymes, however pretty or poetical.

Before Varena was again on duty, she had the pleasure of attending a church entertainment, in which an elocutionist, from the City Lecture Bureau, gave some very dramatic readings. The girl was fascinated; and, being a natural mimic, she anxiously awaited an opportunity to display her own ability along this line. The occasion came at the close of the winter term, and the schoolroom was filled with visitors. Varena sat, expectant, in her seat, her cheeks burning and her eyes, like lustrous lapis-lazuli gems between two American Beauty roses. When her turn came, she took her position, made a little graceful movement of her figure, and greeted the audience with a radiant smile, so exactly as the elocutionist had done that the imitation was at once

recognized, and eager faces leaned forward to be entertained. She announced her piece, "In Old Kentucky." Then, she accompanied every thought with its appropriate gesture, neatly as a trained artist, and with the graceful affectation of sentiment of the modern reader. Unaware of the principal's hostile feelings toward her, she addressed the last words to him, bowed, and returned to her seat.

In Kentucky.

"The moonlight is the softest
In Kentucky.
Summer days come ofttest
In Kentucky.
Friendship is the strongest,
Love's fires grow the longest,
Yet, a wrong is always wrongest,
In Kentucky.

"The sunshine's ever brightest
In Kentucky.
The breezes whisper lightest
In Kentucky.
Plain girls are the fewest,
Maiden's eyes are the bluest,
Their little hearts the truest,
In Kentucky.

"Life's burdens bear the lightest
In Kentucky.
The home fires burn the brightest
In Kentucky.
While the players are the keenest,
Cards come out the meanest,
The pockets empty cleanest,
In Kentucky.

GRANDMOTHER

"Orators are the grandest
In Kentucky.

Officials are the blandest
In Kentucky.

Boys are all the flyest,
Dangers are the nighest,
Taxes are the highest,
In Kentucky.

"The bluegrass waves the bluest
In Kentucky,
Yet bloodhounds are the fewest (?)
In Kentucky.
Moonshine is the clearest—
By no means of the dearest—
And yet it acts the queerest,
In Kentucky.

"The dove notes are the saddest
In Kentucky,
The streams dance on the gladdest
In Kentucky.
Hip pockets are the thickest,
Pistol hands are slickest,
Cylinders turn the quickest,
In Kentucky.

"Song birds are the sweetest
In Kentucky,
Thoroughbreds the fleetest
In Kentucky.
The mountains tower proudest,
Thunder peals the loudest,
The landscape is the grandest
And politics the ———est,
In Kentucky.

Varena read in the pleased expression of her listeners the success of her attempt at elocution, and was surprised by the principal abruptly demanding a copy of her poem. She had not learned of his disapproval of her reciting "The Rule of Cube Root" and she would have been gratified to know that, a second time, the school board pronounced her work "well done." But the irate professor took the matter in his own hands and gave her a severe reprimand, stating positively that, the next time she appeared on the platform she must speak a simple little piece, in a quiet manner, that would be more suitable for a modest young girl. The matter soon spread among the indignant students.

Another Friday that Varena was called on, she demurely walked to her position, and, without a smile or a sign of interest or enthusiasm, looked over the faces of her friends, all aglow with lively anticipation, and soberly spoke the whole of "Mary had a little lamb." One had only to look into her deep, dark eyes to know that a volcano of emotion was held in bounds by the force of her strong, yet gentle will. This time, the school went wild with enthusiasm. They crowded around her during the intermission to praise and congratulate her.

She was a very popular girl; still, her innocent good-fellowship was enigmatical to the boys, who would rather have had a more responsive divinity for the object of their admiration. It is a psychological fact that the young woman who is free and easy in her intercourse with the stronger sex is less given to succumb to the tender passion than one who indulges in prudish reserve.

These were happy school-days for Varena. The little pony that carried her back and forth was her most beloved companion; and the hour before supper, when she sat by the side of her grandmother on

the big veranda, the happiest time of the day. It was then that she told of all her pleasures and triumphs, all her vexations and disappointments; and, with the telling, trouble vanished and only pleasure remained; for Mrs. Falconer was able to supplement each incident narrated with some personal experience that would have a tendency to offset the evil and make stronger the better influences. Detecting in her granddaughter an enthusiastic enjoyment of the admiration of the boys, and fearing that she would awaken to the knowledge that admiration is very closely allied to love, she endeavored to forestall the result by adroitly influencing her mind, in giving her the history of a beautiful girl whom she had known in one of their city parishes, and whose frivolous coquetry had marred a beautiful character.

"Come, Varena, bring a cushion for the back of my chair, and I'll tell you a true story," said Mrs. Falconer, one day.

"Tell me something about mamma, Grandmother. I'd rather hear about her than any one else," Varena pleaded, adjusting her grandmother's chair and fixing one for herself.

"I'll tell you about a young lady who loved your mamma, when she was a young girl not so old as you are now. We were living in Louiston. Your grandfather was pastor of Calvary Church. It seems, as I look back to those times, that it was the most beautiful church, the prettiest parsonage, and the most enjoyable pastorate we ever had. Your mamma was a great pet with the church people, especially with the members of my Bible class, who made wealth, education, and travel the criterion of social caste. Among the members of my class were two young ladies, inseparable friends, though they were as unlike as darkness and daylight. Luella Kendrick was small of stature, with straight black

hair that could not be done artistically; dark, gloomy eyes, a sharp voice that cut through compressed lips; but she was very intellectual, thoroughly good, and a noble, conscientious woman. Mabel Murratt was tall, lithe, and willowy; complexion pure, clear, and soft; hair of a light brown, which fell in little waves and ringlets over a broad forehead; eyes, the kind of blue in liquid depths that are always craving to be loved; the long eyelashes drooped over her cheeks like a shadow from her dark eyebrows. The expression was like Russell's, save that his eyes are brown. The contour of her face and throat was as perfect as the Greek Galatea."

"Who was Galatea, Grandmother?" queried Varena.

"A statue of a beautiful woman, chiselled out of marble by Pygmalion, King of Cyprus. She was so perfect and so exquisitely human that the King loved her and prayed to the gods to quicken her with life. Don't you remember, Russell wrote to you of hearing Julia Marlowe in the play, 'Pygmalion and Galatea?'"

"O, yes, I remember. But, Grandmother, did every one love Mabel, and no one love Luella? And which one loved my mamma?"

"They both loved your mamma and gave her beautiful presents; for they were very wealthy. Luella was too exclusive to have many friends. Mabel was a natural-born coquette. She could no more help it than she could change the aura that surrounded her. Once within the atmosphere of her winning personality and there was no hope for man or boy."

"And don't you think that was nice? I wish I could be so charming that everybody would love me," said Varena, thoughtfully.

"If I could make you realize the seriousness of

genuine love, and the misery of unrequitted affection, I believe you would take back your wish. You would not, for the gratification of personal vanity, be so cruel as to keep men hoping and longing for that which they could never attain," chided Mrs. Falconer.

"But I should think, Grandmother, that you would have to let them love you long enough for you to decide which one you liked best," Varena argued.

"It was not so with Miss Mabel," continued Mrs. Falconer. "She was fascinated with the ravishing sensation of her own adorableness; with knowing that a dozen men came to church to gaze up in the choir-loft at her lovely face and listen to her sweet voice; with the fact that some stood on the street corner for hours to catch a glimpse of her as she drove past; that, when she lost a handkerchief, it was treasured against some heart as a souvenir."

"And didn't she care for any of them?"

"Indeed she did, though her foolish coquetry almost resulted in her marrying the wrong man," Mrs. Falconer replied. "There was a medical student among her satellites—an irreligious, ambitious, young man; tall, dark, and homely; of strong personality and an interesting conversationalist; capable of loving like a tyrant; determined on possessing money and power. He was visiting in the home of Miss Luella, whose brother, Richard, he had known in college, when he met Miss Mabel; and, soon after, he decided to locate in Louiston. The shrewd tactics that he pursued led Miss Mabel to believe that it would require an extra exertion on her part to bring him to acknowledge her supremacy; consequently, she exerted her powers in a direct manner, by which he was able to claim that she had committed herself to him; then, he pressed his suit in a tyrannical fashion. In fact, he so dominated

her that she was afraid to refuse him. Mabel was of a gentle, clinging disposition; it was her womanly dependableness that made her so dear to the heart of every man. This new doctor seemed to hypnotize her, so that she came under his influence more and more. When he was absent, she hated him bitterly and dreaded the sight of him; but, the moment he came in the room or near, her will was swayed by a stronger one, her gaiety was subordinated to his intellectual mood; her affections dormant under his over-mastering passion."

"Go on, Grandmother. Think out loud," said Varena, smiling.

"Bonny View Boulevard, like Hyde Park, London, is the place where all the rich, if not the royalty, drive during the summer evenings. The view overlooks the river, from which there is usually a pleasant breeze. I remember very well, the night they drove past the parsonage on their way to the boulevard. Miss Mabel waved her white-gloved hand at me; and she told me, afterward, that my little talismanic expression, 'D. V.', flashed across her brain, and she resolved, the Lord willing, she would end that *affaire d'amour* during the ride, one way or the other. The doctor entertained her with graphic descriptions of travel, interesting reviews of popular novels, and positive plans for the future, assuming that she was to marry him."

"What was the doctor's name, Grandmother?" asked Varena.

"I cannot recall it, dear. He was not a member of our church. I may think of it presently," Mrs. Falconer answered, endeavoring to recollect the name.

"And did she marry him?"

"Miss Mabel had a strong distaste for the duties of a wife and mother. She did not want to marry

any one. She luxuriated in dinners, receptions, clubs, balls, the opera, golf, and tennis, and would not risk the little encumbrances that accompany conjugal felicity."

"I don't know what that means, Grandmother," said Varena.

"Miss Mabel would have been happy in having a good, kind husband," explained Mrs. Falconer, "to whom she could turn for soothing caresses, when weary of the excitement of social functions, provided he would not require her to be burdened with maternal cares.

"The doctor was urging her to name the day for the consummation of his hopes, and she was debating in her own mind the contingencies of a long engagement, when they rounded a corner and came face to face with Miss Luella and her brother. In the surprised encounter, each read the other correctly. Miss Mabel's heart ceased its palpitating, and cold shivers ran down her spine. She knew, intuitively, that Miss Luella loved the doctor. Her innate nobility of character gave her strength to resist the man and be true to her friend."

"And did the doctor marry Miss Luella?" asked Varena, in surprise.

"Yes; your grandfather performed the marriage ceremony in 1876, and they went to the Centennial at Philadelphia, and Miss Mabel and Luella's brother, Richard went with them."

"And, of course, they finally married and lived happily ever after," laughed Varena.

"Richard and Miss Mabel had always loved each other; but his unexpressed disapprobation of the things she enjoyed, annoyed her. While he was like a good brother, caring for her, and often shielding her from the nuisance of some assiduous admirer, he was patiently waiting for her to become satiated with the homage of the crowd. The year

we left Louiston, your grandfather officiated at their wedding, and your mamma was one of the flower-girls. I often wonder if they have 'lived happy ever after.' The Doctor had a garish intellect and an evil heart, and was ambitious and revengeful; but Richard was generous, erudite, and unsuspecting."

"I am not going to love any one, and I don't want to be loved; then, there'll be no trouble," Varena announced. "Now, there is Ralph. Russell says he's in love with half a dozen girls, who are in love with him. What can he do?"

"Ralph is not serious. That's just his foolishness. He will quit playing with girls after a while, and settle down like a man," said Mrs. Falconer.

"But, Grandmother, that was the way with Miss Mabel, and she came near spoiling her own life and her friend's, too."

"You are right, Varena. All kind of flirting is wrong. It will mar the most beautiful character. I want you to live for something better and nobler," said Mrs. Falconer.

Away at Danboro College, Russell was beginning to be seriously concerned about his brother. Ralph was not satisfied with formal calls at the Seminary on the regular reception evenings: he must meet the girls at the lectures, pass notes during class, happen along to and from church; and be out night after night, walking or driving, with permission or without, it mattered not to him, so he got the girl. Notwithstanding his dissipation, he was gay and happy, making good grades in his studies, and anticipating with pleasure the summer vacation.

"Three months with Grandmother and Sister, then back again for another year of study and pretty girls," laughed Ralph to Russell, as they boarded the train for home.

"I can't see what you find in girls," said Russell. "They are such a waste of time and energy."

"Just wait till you fall in love with one," responded Ralph; "then, you'll see how impossible it is to live without them."

"But you love a dozen," continued Russell, in disgust.

"Well, I can't help it; they are so confoundedly sweet and dear."

"Still, I should think you would take one at a time."

"That would make it too serious and would mean business," laughed Ralph.

"Aren't you in earnest with any of the girls?" asked Russell, in surprise.

"What a foolish question," replied his brother. "Don't you know that I have to go to school three more years, and learn the banking business before I can be serious? Why, Leila, Mildred, Afra, Harriet, Jeannette, Dollie, Nettie, and Elma will all be through school and doubtless married before that time. But say, Russ, wasn't the triumph of the Kappas glorious? I was proud of you when you won the medal. Youngest of the contestants, weren't you? I wish there was something good to tell Grandmother and Sister about me, too. Can't you think of something, even if you have to stretch a little?"

"You had the highest marks in both Latin and mathematics. I think that is pretty good," Russell suggested.

"That's so! I'm glad you remembered it. I don't know what I did with my papers. Must have left them in the class-room when I carried those flowers over to the girls. But Grandmother will believe you. Won't they be glad to see us? They'll be standing on the veranda watching for us, Jennie in the kitchen,

one eye on the fried chicken, the other peeking out the window."

"Grandmother will be so happy, and Varena—I wonder if she has changed much. She writes that she is taller and wears her dresses longer," pondered Russell. "We haven't seen her for ten months."

"I can't conceive of little Sister being grown up. I like to remember her going down the hill astride the old buck sheep. I often entertain my girls by telling them the outrageous things that Sister has done," laughed Ralph. "She'll have a reputation before she goes to college."

At the railroad junction, they bade good-bye to some comrades, purchased lunch and a magazine, and settled down in their seats to read and doze until they could catch a glimpse of the hills at home.

Mrs. Falconer and Varena were on the top of a high hill when the train went whizzing by; but the distance was too great to distinguish any one. They had climbed up there to make the afternoon pass more quickly. It required twenty minutes to walk down to the house, and, in that time, Jim could drive the boys from the village station.

Flushed and excited from the trip through the forest and glad in the anticipation of the home-coming, Mrs. Falconer and Varena stood on the big porch, waiting. Both wore soft, clinging white dresses. In Grandmother's hair was a beautiful Marechal Niel rose; Varena's curls were tied back with a blue ribbon, and on her breast was a bunch of violets. The canary-bird was singing his wildest; the bees were humming over the crimson rambler. Flash gave one joyous bark and sped through the arbor to the open gate and came zigzagging back, jumping and biting the boys' hands.

"Varena, how much you look like Grandmother!" cried Ralph, as he caught her in his arms and kissed her.

Russell's heart throbbed with a new emotion as she stood before him in the first fresh beauty of ripening womanhood. While Ralph overwhelmed her with rapturous kisses, he greeted Grandmother heartily, though less demonstrably. Then giving place to Ralph, he turned to Varena. She was gazing up at him with wide-open, wistful eyes. As he looked into them, a peculiar trembling sensation took possession of him. He tried to say "little Sister," but his tongue remained inactive. He took her hand; the flush left her cheeks, she dropped her eyelids, pulled away her hand, and, throwing her arms around Ralph's neck, hid her face on his shoulder and sobbed. Russell stood, pale and irresolute, for a moment, then went to meet and greet the servants.

"My, little Sister!" said Ralph. "Are you so awfully glad to see us that it makes you cry?"

"I don't know what is the matter with me. I am trembling all over. Maybe I am tired," she sobbed.

"We climbed to the top of the hill to watch the train come in," said Mrs. Falconer. "She will feel better after she has rested and eaten supper."

"Hold up here, Sister, and let me look at you. You are a beauty and no mistake. Say, Russ, how will Sister compare with the girls at school?" Ralph asked.

Russell came slowly back from the dining-room door, watching Varena as she straightened her crushed violets. He did not speak and she did not raise her eyes from the flowers on her breast. A crimson spot glowed on her cheek, and, as she felt the blush spread over her face, she ran into her grandmother's room to bathe in cool water.

In the course of an hour supper was announced.

"This is the most delicious meal that I ever ate in my life," gushed Ralph, as he winked to Jennie to bring him more chicken. "Varena, you're not eating anything. You've been accustomed to this kind

of food all the year. You ought to see some of the grub we have at Moxley's; then you'd know how to appreciate home and Grandmother. Yes, and Jennie, too. She knows how to fry chicken. Is there another breast there, Jennie?"

"You didn't have any dinner, did you?" asked Mrs. Falconer.

"We bought sandwiches and coffee at the junction," replied Russell, "and some fruit on the train."

"There's the man with your trunks," said Mrs. Falconer. "Go show him where to put them, and when you have opened them and hung up your coats, come out on the veranda and tell me about commencement week."

An hour later, they were seated where most of the summer evenings had been spent during the years of childhood. Mrs. Falconer in the old armchair with the background of crimson ramblers, laden with blossoms, questioned; Varena, in a little rocker near her, listened; and the boys on the settee, talked, Ralph being, by far, the most loquacious. All the important events of the year were catalogued, colored by the pride that the boys entertained for each other, and restrained by a sympathy that would shield the grandmother from unnecessary worry. When things pertaining to the interest of the farm were discussed, it was decided that a new tobacco barn should be built during the month that the boys could superintend it. Tobacco was becoming more and more the staple product of Kentucky and the easiest crop to raise while the boys were in college. The land could be let in small lots of three or six acres to tenants whom Jim could manage, for he had grown from a choreboy to a reliable overseer.

While this proposition was under consideration, Varena went into the parlor and quietly opened the piano, and, in the dark, played Mendelssohn's "Consolation." Over and over she played it, strong,

earnest, questioning chords, low, soft, soothing responses. She did not know why she played it, or why the tears traced each other down her cheeks. Nor did she know that Russell had slipped into the room and lay on the sofa listening, unable to comprehend her music or his own anomalous mood.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TOBACCO BARN.

"It will be all work and no play, this summer," said Russell, early one morning, as he and Ralph walked out to the stables, followed by Jim.

"It won't take long to build a tobacco barn," Ralph replied.

"This stable is to have a new roof; there are two new fences to put up, and the little cabin must be moved down by the spring and fixed for the tenant," enumerated Russell.

"Then there's the water-gap that the last rain washed out. The worst job is getting the thistles cut out of the pasture. It makes me tired," sighed Ralph.

"I'm ashamed we don't get more done in your absence, Marse Russell," said Jim, apologetically.

"That's all right, Jim. You do as much as one man can do. The gist of the matter is, that Grandmother has set her heart on too many improvements for one summer. I wonder why she don't get Uncle Henry to come back?" Russell asked.

"Jack Lindley saw him on the mailboat, last week," said Ralph.

"Was he porter?"

"I think so," replied Ralph. "Wonder why he left the packet?"

"He was here the week 'fore you got home from school," added Jim.

"He was!" and Ralph exchanged a look with

Russell. "Strange that Grandmother never spoke of it."

"Yes, sir; he was here and ate his supper. And Uncle Henry an' Grandmother were sittin' down under your old Peace Palace tree, a talkin' when I went to town. I took four little calves down an' shipped 'em to the city, an' didn't get back 'fore nine o'clock; an' he was gone. Somethin' mysterious 'bout that old nigger. Now, Jennie, she says, Uncle Henry ain't more'n half bright, an' the Grandmother's just got to humor him, 'cause she's know'd him so long," explained Jim.

"And what Jennie says is about right, eh?" teased Ralph.

"Jennie's no lame duck. She generally knows what she's talkin' 'bout," grinned Jim, turning his back to hide his pleasure in being teased about the maid.

"So it's a sure thing, is it, Jim?" laughed Ralph.

"'Away down South in de land of roses,
Is my honey dat I love so well,'"

—hummed Jim, in an undertone.

"I think this is the site for the new barn," and Russell stopped on a knoll a short distance from the stable. "Get out your dimensions, Ralph, and let us stake it off and see if we can have room for a wagon road on the north side."

"The carpenter gave me the chart of the tobacco barn that he put up last week." Ralph took the plan from his pocket and continued: "Why not follow these estimates? This is about what Grandmother wants."

After an hour's deliberation, Jim was sent to repair the water-gap, Ralph to town to purchase building material, and Russell to secure men to exterminate the thistles.

Before the brothers separated, Ralph remarked: "Do you know, Russ, I think Uncle Henry knows some secret of importance."

"I credit him with knowing a dozen," assented Russell. "He lived through war times, when all sorts of queer things were done. I've heard him tell of helping pack boxes of silver, and fine china, and shipping them to Indiana and Ohio, to be kept by friends till the war closed. One old woman had two cats that she loved like babies; and she imagined the guerillas would kill and eat them up, so she put them in a box and marked it, 'This side up, handle with care,' and expressed them to her daughter in Cincinnati."

Ralph rode away laughing; but Russell turned to his duties, seriously pondering the situation. The absence of the faithful old overseer could not be explained on simple grounds; but so long as Grandmother withheld her confidence, idle curiosity should be restrained.

About noon, Ralph rode up to the pasture, where he expected to find Russell superintending the men in the grubbing of the thistles, and learned that he had not been there for two hours. He sought him at the house, and was told to look up on the hillside. From the kitchen window, he could see his brother, stretched out on the grass in the shade of a big tree, while his sister was sitting near, reading aloud. Occasionally their laughter would float down, and Varena could be seen tossing bread crumbs to her pet gophers and squirrels.

"How long before dinner will be ready, Jennie?" asked Ralph, fishing the chicken liver out of the skillet.

"'Bout twenty minutes, sir," replied Jennie.

"Well, I'll take a rest, too." Taking a newspaper, Ralph found a shady place on the lawn; but soon he was in dreamland, where pretty girls were

building a pyramid of books over his empty stomach.

"Hello, old fellow! All your lumber bought, back home and fast asleep," said Russell, standing over his brother with Varena's magazine in his hand.

Ralph stretched himself, saying: "You're a great architect. I thought, when you weren't in the pasture, you'd be poring over the plans for the building. Who was it said, 'all work and no play this summer?' I wanted you to go back to town with me. I didn't buy half the stuff."

"What's the trouble, Ralph?" asked Russell, blushing, "I didn't mean to shirk. I was so hot grubbing in the sun, and Sister looked so cool and inviting in the shade of her big tree, that I ran over to tease her a bit, and she began reading aloud."

"O it's all right. I know you do twice the amount of work that I do. We'll go together this afternoon and complete the purchases. They had a new kind of roofing and patent hinges for the airing-planks, and an invention for lifting the tobacco sticks to position, and I was not competent to decide about them. There's not much time lost. The workmen will be here Thursday; so, if we get the material out tomorrow, I'm sure we can rush the thing right along." Ralph rose and they went in to dinner.

For weeks the work on the farm progressed admirably; the tenant house was repaired, the water-gap remade, the stable roofed, the stock cistern cleaned, and the new barn loomed up in fine proportions. In fact, the building was complete, with the exception of a few feet of flooring, when Russell went to the house to get the money to pay off the workmen.

The last plank was laid, the tools stacked in their cases, and the men waited. Ralph praised the work and the speed with which it was done, told several jokes and college yarns, and still his brother did not return. Jim, coming from the village, drove by the

barn, with a basket of apples in the spring-wagon, which Ralph took and passed over to the laborers, then urged him to hasten to the house, supposing he had been sent to town for change. In the enjoyment of the fruit, time was not noted; but no paymaster appeared, and Ralph impatiently started on the hunt of him. Before he reached the yard gate, he heard the explanation: Russell and Varena were playing duets. Even in his vexation, Ralph smiled, remembering when his brother let his music cause him to forget to come to class for the closing examination. Hearing the footsteps, Russell bounded up from the piano and rushed to the barn. Ralph understood; for he went to sleep night after night, listening to "Zampa," "Olympia," "Calif of Bagdad," or some other duet from the Leipzig collection.

Altogether, this was a rare summer. A new wire fence enclosed the lots that were luxuriant in tobacco plants; the tenants occupied the little cottage by the brook; the cows feasted on the long grass free from prickly thistles; harvests were bountiful, and the weather fine. The neighborhood and village friends were stirred to chattering curiosity by invitations to a birthday party at Finden. The young people were invited to a one o'clock dinner, and supper on the beach, including boating and bathing in the river.

"Whose birthday can it be?" fretted Clara Pryor.

"What does it matter?" Angie Ross replied.

"Mrs. Falconer stated positively that there must be no presents."

"If it were Varena's birthday, I'd take one any way," Clara declared.

"Russell's, you mean," laughed her friend, teasingly.

"She'd like to give herself to Russell," said Jack Lindley, coming up with his sister.

Clara drew herself up haughtily, and replied: "There are not many sensible girls who wouldn't."

"Come in, girls, and let's talk the matter over," said Florence Lindley. "Jack, bring some chairs out of mamma's room; it's cooler on the veranda. I wonder what we shall do all day. Mrs. Falconer will not let us dance, or play cards, or even have a jolly kissing game."

"Varena never kissed any boy, except her brothers. You can't say that of yourself, Florence," said one of the girls, laughing.

"Don't want to. I'm sure I don't enjoy kissing such a tease as Jack is," replied Florence.

"I'll wager Varena gets a kiss from some other boy if it's her birthday," bragged Jack Lindley.

"My cat against your dog, you don't dare," laughed his sister.

"Shake hands, old girl, you'll see. If I win your cat, I'll kill it, too. I hate cats," said Jack.

"And I'll sell your dog," she replied. "I don't like dogs."

As the merry crowd assembled on the big veranda at Finden, they were greeted by the hostess and her grandchildren, and conducted to rooms in which they could put off their hats, adjust a tie, or fasten up a stray curl.

"Mrs. Falconer and Varena are dressed exactly alike," whispered one girl. "I believe it's their birthday."

"That's no sign," Angie Ross declared. "They always dress alike, winter and summer. Their fine clothes and every-day dresses are made from the same pieces of goods. Varena does it."

"They just worship each other," said Florence Lindley, in an undertone.

"There isn't any sign of dinner," Angie Ross whispered. "I saw in the dining-room."

"Hush!" urged Florence, "and loosen this hat pin, if you can, please, without spoiling my hair."

"Listen! listen!" Clara exclaimed.

"That's the village hotel bell. Sounds as near as the barn," averred Angie Ross.

"Come, girls!" called the boys from the veranda.

"Where are you going?" they cried, as they followed them through the arbor, out toward the barn.

"Where's your grandmother?" Florence inquired of Varena.

"Come, I'll show you," she replied, leading on to where the boys were giving expression to their surprise, in wild vociferation.

The girls crowded on to the threshold wondering, laughing. The inside of the new tobacco barn was festooned from king-post to ground floor with all the colors of the rainbow. Soft, fleecy bunting hung in waves from the crossbeams, fastened here and there with flowers and green branches. A pyramid of boxes was hidden with blooming potted plants. Two long ladders were decorated with green and white and joined at the top with the date of the day, in gilt letters. Across the new pine floor was a table, four by thirty feet, bountifully laden with delicious edibles. When the young people were seated, Russell knocked on the table and they listened breathlessly, expecting to learn whose birthday they were celebrating. Mrs. Falconer quietly asked a blessing. A sigh of disappointment went round the board, but was soon forgotten in the merry feasting.

After dinner, the company divided into smaller groups. Some took part in the games that had been arranged for their amusement; others stole away to the house, where they could have music, or swing in the hammock; a few brave ones climbed in a hay-mow and indulged in the excitement of jumping down a distance of eighteen or twenty feet to a pile of soft

hay. Jack Lindley and Varena were the most venturesome, making the drop from a beam twenty-two feet high.

At five o'clock, the jolly party started to the river. Mrs. Falconer and the servants had gone on before. The point selected was a gravelly beach. The bank above it was about thirty feet high, perpendicular in some places; in others made accessible by projections of broken rock, shrubbery, or roots of trees. On top of the bank was a narrow strip of forest. The happy young people scrambled down the winding path, stumbling, falling, screaming, laughing, jesting, teasing, playing any kind of a prank that would add to the excitement or furnish amusement.

"O look at the tents! Our bathing-suits are there. I saw Jennie collecting them," cried one.

"One, two, three, four, five rowboats," counted another.

"Don't that fire blaze high! Here, brother, take this stick along," Florence ordered.

"All right," said Jack. "You boys, there, gather some brush as you go along, and add fuel to the flames. Don't leave it all for Jim to do."

"What is Ralph doing?" asked Clara.

"Building a little furnace to make coffee. Was there ever anything so jolly," gushed Florence.

"What's that other thing? It looks like a summer house or bower."

"What is it, anyway, all covered with leaves and flowers?"

"It's a throne. The birthday queen is to occupy it, sure as may name's Jack."

Already the boats were full and paddles were splashing. A few were in the water, while others were getting on their bathing suits.

"Hello, Jack! Where have you been? Are you afraid of the water? Get ready and come out, and I'll race with you," called Varena, from the river.

Jack did not need a second invitation. He was infatuated with the girl. Full of the lively anticipation of winning the wager he had made with his sister, he now saw his chance to beat her in the race, catch her, and get a kiss for his reward. When he made his appearance in the river, the bathers and others on the shore prepared to watch the race with interest.

"How much handicap will you give me and race to the corner of the barge yonder?" asked Varena, pointing to the wreck of an old barge that was some distance down the river.

"Two minutes," said Jack.

Ralph timed the start and the race began. The distance between them was not lessened until after Varena had passed the limit designated, when she turned to receive Jack's acknowledgment of her skill. The expression in the boy's face frightened her, and she knew instinctively that he was determined on catching her. The long barge was between her and the land, so she started down-stream. On, they went, with Mrs. Falconer running along the shore, calling them to "Come back," but the reckless girl turned toward the middle of the river. The crowd was so intent on watching the swimmers that they did not notice a skiff that two strong arms brought dancing to the rescue. Jack was in an arm's length of Varena when Russell dropped his oar, caught her by the hand, and pulled her into the boat.

"Don't leave Jack, Russell; he's almost exhausted," panted the girl.

Chagrined and disappointed, Jack held to the boat a few minutes, and then swam to the shore.

Half an hour later, a cloth was spread on the ground, rugs placed around it, and the crowd, oriental fashion, enjoyed their supper.

"Mrs. Falconer, tell us a story, please," some one called.

"What kind of a story?" she asked.

"A funny one," said one.

"A love-story," another suggested.

"Don't have anybody killed," said Clara.

"I always tell true stories," Mrs. Falconer stated.

"Tell us about people getting married, and 'living happy ever after,'" laughed Jack.

"Chestnuts," called his sister.

"Tell about the girl with the awful temper," Varena suggested.

"Shall I describe the first marriage ceremony that your grandfather performed?" Mrs. Falconer asked of Varena.

"O yes, please!" spoke several.

"He was quite a young man at that time, and had spent most of his years in intellectual pursuits and studious preparation for the ministry; consequently, he was very timid and modest in society. When an invitation came, requesting him to officiate at the wedding in an aristocratic family, he was deeply concerned about his ability to give satisfaction, and determined to put forth his best efforts and make a reputation that would give him popularity with the young people. Not wishing to use the manual, he memorized the marriage rite; and to make sure that he would do every part perfectly, he went up into his bedroom and placed a chair by the side of the bed-post. He stood before them and smiled at the chair in the manner he thought would encourage the bride, bowed to the bed-post with the dignity necessary to impress the bridegroom, and married the chair to the bed-post. This he did day after day, until he felt sure he could not possibly forget a word or a gesture. The wedding-hour came. In those days, a previous rehearsing with the couple themselves was not practised; so he was ushered to his place. The brilliant light and the elaborate decollete dresses dazed him for a moment; but he kept his

mind on the formula, and his eyes on the door through which the bride and bridegroom would enter. When they came slowly toward him, his collar began to tighten, his coat grew small across the breast, one knee hit against the other; and he forgot every thing, staring before him, seeing nothing but a *chair and a bed-post.*"

"O land! And didn't he marry them?" asked half a dozen.

"I suppose he pronounced them 'man and wife' after some sort of fashion, as no one was called upon to repeat the ceremony," added Mrs. Falconer.

"Tell another one, please."

"Yes, do. It's lots of fun to lie here and eat and listen."

"There was a very nice couple to be married when we lived in Wisconsin. The bride was one of those sweet, modest girls, whose careful bringing-up made her a choice morsel for a good man. The bridegroom was a bashful gentleman, and I'm sure that he never had kissed her. He was too timid to have done such a thing. The minister met them in a private room, made out the certificates, and told them about what the ceremony would be. He had a droll humor in him that was often taken seriously.

"'Now, then, I shall have the first kiss,' he said, as they prepared to enter the parlor. The bride blushed.

"'No, sir,' emphatically spoke the bridegroom.

"'That is my privilege, though it is not often that I claim it,' said Mr. Falconer, with an amused twinkle in his eye.

"The guests were assembled. Lohengrin's wedding-march was calling them to join heart and hand. The ceremony was half through; that is, they each had responded, 'I do,' and the preacher raised his hands to make the prayer before pronouncing them 'man and wife,' when the bridegroom, mistaking the

movement for an attempt to get the kiss, slipped his arm around the girl, put the other hand under her chin, and kissed her lips heartily, and the preacher went on praying."

"Ha, ha, ha," roared the crowd.

"Tell another. Tell another," came the request.

"A venerable-looking Southerner, with a beautiful black-eyed Northern lady came to the parsonage after we had moved South. When the papers were made out, Mr. Falconer noticed that they bore the same name, had been married, and divorced. When he questioned them, he learned that they had married each other before the war, and separated because of their political principles; she had taken their babe and gone North to her father's, and he had fought for the Southland. After peace was declared, he courted her again, and we married them when their boy was fifteen years old."

"I suspect ever so many couples parted during the war," commented Florence.

"Never to meet again," drolled Jack.

"Tell some more, please."

"No," said Ralph. "Everybody go stand down in front of the flower throne and shut your eyes, till I say '*now*'; then open them and see how many snowflakes you can catch."

"I've eaten so much I can't get up," groaned Jack.

The crowd collected in front of the rustic flower-trimmed bower, and, with peeking eyes and smiling lips, watched Mrs. Falconer take the seat and open a large paper box.

"O you're looking," said Varena to Jack, stepping in front of him and covering his eyes with her hands.

"Now!" cried Ralph. "It is Grandmother's birthday. Look out!"

Mrs. Falconer, laughing like a child, began throwing at them handfuls of bonbons and tidbits; egg-

kisses, caramels, funny-caps, whistles, paper faces, and queer little contrivances that amused the jolly picnic party. As Varena drew down her hands, smiling into Jack's face, the opportunity, the temptation, was too great for him. Before she was aware, he caught her to him and kissed her. Releasing her instantly, he found himself sprawling on the ground. By the time he had comprehended what had happened to him, Russell had put Varena into a skiff and pushed out into the river. The girl's cheeks were crimson and her brother's were whiter than his collar. The excitement and interest in catching the dainties and snapping the bonbons was a cover to Jack's humiliation. Those who saw him fall, thought he was scrambling to get a paper cap that the wind carried away.

Ralph saw the blow, and, stepping down to Jack, said: "I hope you'll not get mad, Jack. Russ didn't design to strike so hard, and I apologize for him. He's a fool about Sister and you know he's one of those boys who never kissed a girl in his life. I know you were just in fun. I don't want any ugly feeling to spoil Grandmother's birthday. Jack, you'll consider her; that's a good fellow."

"I'll overlook it for her sake, but——" he began.

"Hush," whispered Ralph, as a crowd of girls came toward them.

"We want you to make a speech, Jack," said his sister. "Come and congratulate Mrs. Falconer and thank her for the pleasure she's given us."

He went forward and perfunctorily stammered a few words, and Mrs. Falconer assured them she appreciated all they would like to express and that she had enjoyed the day fully as much as they had.

When the party climbed the bank, Russell and Varena could be seen far up the river, apparently sitting together, letting the skiff drift down-stream.

"It's kind o' tough on you, Marse Ralph, to help

get all these buggies," said Jim, harnessing a horse that night.

"Don't speak of it, Jim. Russ had a little bout with Jack, and I reckon he won't bring Sister home till he's gone," said Ralph, in an undertone.

"I saw it," grinned Jim. "Served him right."

"It's all right to kiss other fellow's sisters; but other fellows mustn't kiss our sister. That's the great commandment, is it? Do as you wouldn't be done by," commented Ralph.

By ten o'clock the young people were gone, the servants asleep and the house quiet, save for Mrs. Falconer's step as she paced back and forth along the veranda, while Ralph dozed on the settee. Again and again, she stopped at the end of the veranda, looked away in the starlight, and listened.

"Wake up, Ralph; I know something has happened to the children. It may be the boat sprang a leak, or run into a snag and upset. Ralph, how can you sleep when they may be in distress?" she urged.

"Grandmother, I wish you wouldn't worry," said Ralph, rousing himself. "I know they floated downstream, enjoying the moon on the water, forgetting that it would take longer to row back up-stream. The river is falling and the water is swift. I would go after them in a minute, if I weren't sure they are safe and just having a good time."

Mrs. Falconer sat down and waited until the clock struck eleven. Ralph was disturbed in his slumbers by hearing her leave the veranda.

"Come back, Grandmother," he called, "and wait just five minutes; then I'll go."

"This afternoon, I thought this one of the happiest days of my life," said Grandmother; "but, now——"

"Listen!" interrupted Ralph. "Didn't I tell you!

That is Russ's call. He wants us to know they're coming."

"And now it really is the happiest," she smiled as she brushed a tear from her cheek.

"O Grandmother, we're so sorry that we've kept you worrying," pleaded Varena. "It was so lovely on the water. We just couldn't come in; but, indeed, we didn't mean to stay so long."

"How far down the river did you go?" yawned Ralph.

"Not very far. We sat on the bank a while after we came back," said Russell.

"I wish you'd tell us the next time, so I could go to bed and Grandmother would not worry so," was Ralph's good-night speech.

"We didn't know it was so late," explained Varena.

"'All's well that ends well,'" quoted Mrs. Falconer. "It has been a very happy birthday, and a pleasant dedicating of the new barn."

"I hope you will live to see it filled with fine tobacco for many, many years," said Russell.

CHAPTER V.

RARE GEMS.

Going back eighteen or twenty years, to the period when a radical change was taking place in the administration of the government, when the party that had been reaping the benefits of executive and elective emoluments for two dozen years was voted to step aside and permit a new jurisdiction to enjoy the remunerative places of a reconstructed nation, the honorable office of District Judge of the Federal Court of Louiston was given to J. J. Johnson, a man of deep convictions, erudite, experienced, keen-sighted, just, secretive, persistent, and merciless. He was a bachelor, who had spent his early life pouring over his law books, and laying up money with which he purposed building a lovely home for the dear girl he had enthroned in his heart. The home was never built; for the girl, ignorant of the love of the great lawyer and the honor in store for her, had quietly married his subordinate partner. Cherishing his secret, he watched over her interests, took her husband into full partnership; and, after her death, he gave his untiring devotion to her daughter. It was to a reception in the palatial home of the latter, he was now hastening. The air was oppressively warm, and he stopped on the veranda, recognizing, with an ugly smile, the voice that floated through the window.

“ ‘Ye who believe in affection that hopes, and endures, and is patient,’ ” quoted Dr. Harding.

“ ‘Ye who believe in the beauty and strength of
woman’s devotion,
List to the mournful tradition still sung by the pines
of the forest,
List to a tale of a love in Acadia, home of the
happy,’ ”

—continued Mrs. Kendrick, throwing a mischievous glance at her quondam lover.

They stood before a little statue, modelled after S. F. Lynn’s “Evangeline.” Her hands are clasped, her head bowed, her whole attitude expressive of deep sorrow as she contemplates a nameless grave.

“Woman’s devotion,” sneered Dr. Harding, “ ‘Inconsistent as the passing wind.’ ”

“Evangeline.” Mrs. Kendrick laid her delicate, jewelled fingers over the hands of the statue and quoted:

“ ‘Sometimes in churchyards strayed, and gazed on
the crosses and tombstones,
Sat by some nameless grave, and thought that per-
haps in its bosom
He was already at rest, and she longed to slumber
beside him.’ ”

“The sculptor portrays her in a state of aberration, grief having affected her brain,” commented Dr. Harding, satirically.

“The artist may have such an idea. Longfellow does not so represent her. On the contrary, we find in her character a clear, sane, beautiful delineation of love that is faithful unto death,” insisted Mrs. Kendrick.

“All human love is irrational and insane,” commented the Doctor; “but Dryden says, ‘There is a pleasure in being mad.’ ”

“ ‘Which none but mad men know,’ ” Mrs. Ken-

drick finished the quotation, and, smiling, left him to meet other guests.

The drawing-room into which they entered was large and artistically furnished. The French windows, of crown glass, were delicately shaded with curtains of Brussels net. On a pedestal between the windows, stood a statue of Gibson's "Tinted Venus." On the walls, a few rare paintings found a becoming background in the delicate gray ingrain that extended three-quarters up, to where a misty forest contained suggestions of the deer and hounds; above the whole, was a ceiling like a Corot sky. The furnishings were in rosewood. An exquisite grille separated this room from the parlor, where, from a mahogany davenport, looking through a polygonal bay-window, one could enjoy a view of the green lawn. On the west side of the parlor, there was a colonial mantel with brass andirons in the fireplace; four antique brass candle-sticks and a faience vase stood on the mantel, showing double in the French mirror above. A dozen leather-bottomed mahogany chairs, and a square table with chocolate and coffee service of Sevres cups and souvenir spoons, completed the attractions. To the left of this, the library extended. Here, there was a large rectangular bay-window, with an upholstered window-seat and half a dozen pillows, screened by heavy curtains; a centre-table of quartered oak, covered with periodicals, from Harper's to the City Daily; rows of books, embracing history, biography, poetry, most of the old masters, and the best of the new novels; and comfortable chairs and divans. Above the cases were busts of the authors, and over the ceiling and upper wall floated oreads, dryads, and cupids in a maze of cloudy scenery. Beyond the library was the music-room. A Steinway grand, a guitar, a music-cabinet, portraits of the old masters and modern artists, ebony furniture, and delicate green decorations, formed an at-

mosphere of peaceful harmony. The dining-room, to the right of the music-room, was of white pine, with just a suspicion of spring blossoms and strawberries in the tinted walls. There were a few steel engravings, Millett's "Angelus"; Corot's "Dance of the Nymphs"; Holme's "Can You Talk?" and "Words of Comfort." The reception-hall and stairs were unique, in that each pilaster in the balustrade was modelled after a statue, most of them mythological. Hard wood and Wilton velvet rugs throughout completed the lower floor of this elegant home.

Still, the most beautiful adornment was the young mistress, now welcoming a number of friends to an evening reception. Gowned in a princess of empire green *cachemire de soie*, bodice decollete, ravishing sleeves of soft tucked tulle, finishings of panne velvet and petals of roses, with a diamond brooch holding a single la France rose on her breast, and coiffure a mystery of waves and ringlets, she moved across the room. A warm hand-clasp for one, a pleasant wave for another and a smile for all, she soon had the party adjusted as each would enjoy the other most. This was her pride, her ambition, to be a successful, accomplished, and beloved hostess. She was an adept in bringing together congenial people and in avoiding the shoals of intrigue and the pitfalls of malice. Her hobby was to be intrinsically beautiful in character and in personal appearance. Of envy, and jealousy, she desired to remain in ignorance. She was zealous in works of charity, enjoying the encomiums of the ragamuffins; ardent in the esthetic enjoyment of the church service, for the regard and appreciation of the minister and the officials contributed to her satisfaction with herself; and enthusiastic in the literary work of the clubs, with a deep joy in the consciousness of matching witticism with intellect, repartee with reason. She possessed a peculiar faculty of being able to draw the most brilliant thought

from the brain of one, and then turning it back for his admiration as her own conception. Mabel Kendrick believed that God designed for his creatures a life of goodness and happiness, and that it was the duty of every one to shun whatever would vex or annoy. A great admirer of her husband, she rejoiced in the consciousness of perfect love and confidence.

"This is a genuine pleasure, Judge Johnson," said Richard Kendrick, standing near his wife and grasping the hand of their friend. "We began to fear that you were not coming."

"I'm not so late as I appear. I have been on the veranda," apologized the Judge. He stood erect, glancing thoughtfully through the rooms; which were filled with dress suits, and floating clouds of sheeny, filmy habiliment, where sparkling gems vied with the brightness of laughing eyes; and tinted lights kissed the blushing cheeks.

"Is that not a picture to make you forget your gloomy court-room and horrid trials," said Mrs. Kendrick, following his gaze.

"Rather it is a subject of serious contemplation, that, beneath that bright surface of innocence and beauty, there flows an undercurrent of passion which can lead to the cruelties that result in divorce and ruin——"

"My dear Judge, don't, don't!" interrupted Mrs. Kendrick, beaming on him with radiant smiles. "You have been a criminal lawyer so long you see the wicked in everything, like the cartoonist who can't see a person straight or normal. I must prescribe a course of treatment for you, and put you under the influence of the sect who claims that you can make a person what he should be, by just thinking him so."

"That is a wise doctrine for one to whom existence is simply to enjoy life and impart to others her talis-

manic delectableness," said the Judge, gallantly, as his hostess turned to other guests. "It is not the privilege of one who is studying human nature in a desire to acquire the ability to read unexpressed thought," he continued, speaking to his host.

"Do you think Dr. Bertillon will give any material aid in the matter of detecting criminals by his photographic measurements?" asked Richard Kendrick.

"That remains to be proved," the Judge answered. "The theory of 'danger-word questioning' is gaining some advocates. With me, the eye is the index of the brain. I can detect the lie in any eye that I have ever looked into." He lowered his voice as Dr. Harding appeared.

"Judge Johnson," said the Doctor, "I'm glad you find time for a social gathering occasionally."

"I am a habitué of only a few places; this is one of them. But where is your wife? I do not see her here," replied the Judge.

"The boys were restless, and she preferred to remain with them until they went to sleep. She'll be in later. You know we live next door, all in one yard," said Dr. Harding, absently, his eyes following his hostess.

"I do not forget that your wife is a sister of Mr. Kendrick, and that you have two of the handsomest places on the avenue," the Judge replied.

"We don't boast of anything like this," added Dr. Harding, indicating the beautiful rooms, as his eye swept the vista to the far music-room in search of the hostess.

"You have more to be proud of in Mrs. Harding's two fine boys," said the Judge. "A home is not complete without children." He laid his hand affectionately on the shoulder of his host.

A shadow passed over the serene countenance of Richard Kendrick. He did not reply, but walked back to the parlor, where his wife was dispensing

coffee and wafers to her guests. The aura of her beauty, temperament, talent, and heart, permeating the circle and filling the atmosphere with a glad radiance of happiness, thrilled the soul of her husband, until he was startled from his proud contemplation of the scene by the insinuating tones of his brother-in-law, who stood at his elbow, saying:

"Peerless as Josephine; more generous than Napoleon."

Again the cloud passed over the brow of the host; but this time he turned away in anger and ran against a bright young girl, to whom he said: "I beg your pardon, Miss Inez."

"I wasn't thinking of you turning 'round so quickly," she laughed. "Mrs. Kendrick sent me to bring you and Judge Johnson to have your coffee."

"Come, we'll find the Judge in the drawing-room," he replied, leading the way, exchanging a word here and there as they passed among the guests. "Miss Inez is to escort you to the lunch-table, Judge Johnson."

"The prettiest little girl in the room," laughed Judge Johnson, offering her his arm.

"I'm to take you both," she said, putting her dainty fingers on Richard Kendrick's arm also.

As they approached, Mrs. Kendrick said to the Judge: "Did you forget that I was waiting for you, Judge Johnson? I can't allow any one else to sugar your coffee."

"Your smile makes it sufficiently sweet for me," replied the Judge, taking the coffee and refusing the sugar.

"She won't allow me to make pretty speeches to her," said Edgar Mills, a young man who stood behind her chair, looking with rapture on her voluptuous throat.

"Have you ever tried?" she asked, reprovingly.

"No, madam, I never dared," he replied, abashed.

"It is an old friend's privilege," said the Judge, good-naturedly.

"I wish I were an old friend, or a kid," said Edgar, hanging his head in pathetic affectation. "I heard one of those little nephews say he loved his Aunt Mabel better than he did his papa."

"Will you kindly bring some of the ladies for their coffee?" asked Mrs. Kendrick, ignoring the last remark.

"With pleasure," he replied.

He left her immediately; but, finding Miss Inez alone on the library window-seat, pouting because her sweetheart was enamored of their hostess, he did not return. Their seclusion was not long without interruption; for, here, the literati collected to enjoy this treasury of jewels, this thesaurus of rare and beautiful gems. Not the polished stones of lapidary that were found in the mines of the earth, or the dark unfathomed caves of the ocean; not the products of material elements: no combination of the chemist could produce any likeness to them; for they belonged to a higher kingdom—spiritual inhabitants of the world of thought.

"I shall have to excuse you, Judge Johnson. I see Richard looking longingly at his books," said Mrs. Kendrick.

Answering his wife's smile with a face aglow with pleasure, the host replied: "I have some new publications that I know you will be glad to examine; and I have been culling from old pamphlets some rare gems that I wish to combine in a book of favorite poems. I should like for you to look at them."

As they passed from the parlor, he greeted his sister cordially, saying: "I'm glad you have come, Luella; Mabel is waiting for you."

"Come, Luella, please, and take my place," said Mrs. Kendrick, resigning her seat by the table to her sister-in-law, Mrs. Harding. "I'm so glad you

left those naughty boys; for I need you. I must go and speak to some who are leaving early. Did the boys let you come, or did you leave them crying?"

"They let me come to bring a kiss to Aunt Mabel," replied Mrs. Harding.

"The little dears, how nice of them. I don't know how we could live without those boys," gushed Mabel.

"I thought you did not care for children," spoke a woman in surprise.

"I would not be bothered with one of my own for the wealth of Cræsus," laughed Mrs. Kendrick; "but I dote on Luella's boys. They are darlings."

"My children are the strongest tie between me and my husband," said a serious little woman, whose husband was a notorious "lady's man."

"It takes children, good looks, and money to hold my little man," laughed Mrs. Benson, wife of an elder in Calvary Church.

"I think it is the man himself that keeps my husband true," said Mrs. Kendrick, seriously. "I'm sure I could not love and respect him if any one could win him to indulge in a single wandering thought. A man who can be enticed from his allegiance to his wife is not a man at all. He's a ninny or a rascal."

"Experience proves that many good men have been fascinated or bewitched by some unscrupulous beauty," gently mused the little woman.

"Anyway, it looks to me," continued Mrs. Kendrick, "that the law allowing a woman to sue for damage for alienated affection is extremely absurd. It presupposes that the wife was not worthy of his love and needed pay for her own deficiencies, rather than his dereliction of duty."

"Pardon me, Sister," said Mrs. Harding; "you

forget that men marry 'for beter or for worse,' and the law of God demands the fulfilment of the vow."

"O well, I never argue," laughed Mrs. Kendrick; "for argument leads to vexation, and every annoyance brings a wrinkle. We must all keep our good looks if we would keep our husband's affection."

"But where there is no beauty to preserve?" questioned the serious little woman.

"Whatever the qualities were that won the sweetheart should be more winning with the embellishment of years," continued Mrs. Kendrick. "Excuse me, ladies, I've promised the young people some music, though it will be a shame to disturb the gentlemen in the library."

"You are fortunate in possessing these rare collections," said Elder Benson, taking an old volume from a shelf.

"My father found them while travelling in different countries. That book you hold is Vedic Sanskrit; and hidden in its pages are many beautiful thoughts," replied the host.

"It is fortunate for us of limited education that most of our brilliant gems have a setting in imperishable English words. Pure English, pure English," mused the elder, looking curiously into the old Latin and Greek books.

"I have a pet theory," said Mrs. Kendrick stopping on her way to the music-room, "that English is the language of poetry. Byron may have been assisted in his loftiest flights by the sunny skies, the balmy breeze, and *dolce far niente* spirit of Italy; but "Childe Harold" could only have interpretation in the language of Shakespeare. Judge Johnson can you forget Blackstone long enough to give us your favorite gem of poetry?"

"Listen to me first, Judge," laughed Elder Benson. "Here is Butler's 'Hudibras,' " and he quoted:

“ ‘Laws do not put the least restraint
Upon our freedom, but maintain it;
Or, if it does, 'tis for our good,
To give us freer latitude;
For wholesome laws preserve us free,
By stinting of our liberty.’ ”

“My fair friend,” said the Judge, smiling on his hostess, “thinks my cranium is crammed with criminals, that I am a crabbed creature, created to create crime, when in reality, I lead a dual life. To prove this statement, I shall give you my favorite verse and tell you why I love it. It was many, many years ago, when the sunshine was a curiosity, when a sound was a mystery, and the light was bewildering, that there came to my infantile mind a soft melody that seemed a reminiscence of some former state of being; and, under its soothing spell, I sank away into a sweet dream of converse with the inhabitants of the upper realm; and ever through my childhood and on through my developed physical and mental manhood, I cherished these nursery rhymes:

“ ‘Hush, my babe, lie still and slumber,
Holy angels guard thy bed,
Heavenly blessings without number,
Gently fall around thy head.’ ”

“Set in the same casket is that truly universal prayer:

“ ‘Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep,
If I should die before I wake,
I pray the Lord my soul to take.’ ”

“Those are gems of the first water. They never grow old; and we never grow too old to repeat them and feel their power.”

"I remember very well," said the Rev. Mr. Elliot, pastor of Calvary Church, "when, in youthful days, and verging on to the development of mental powers, how sublime seemed the realm of poetry. It first came to me as a revelation through the precious word of God. It was with poetic rapture that I translated from the Hebrew the first words of Genesis and lost myself in the grand metrical truths:

"In the beginning God created
And God said let there be light,—
And there was light.'

"Then, in later years, when able to comprehend more of the true and beautiful, and view the earth and created things as the expression of the divine will, I found in the poetic composition of the sacred books, the highest satisfaction which the esthetic element of our nature is capable of enjoying. What grand imagery is drawn from the starry heavens; what poetic flights into fathomless space! The doors of the spiritual world are opened, and mortals hold converse with the eternal. Where, in all fields of poetry, ancient or modern, do we find a charm like this:

"In thoughts from the vision of the night
When deep sleep falleth upon man,
Fear came upon me and trembling,
Which made my bones to shake.
Then a spirit passed before my face,—
The hair of my flesh stood up;—
And stood still, but I could not discern the form
 thereof
An image was before mine eyes.
There was silence, and I heard a voice saying—
Shall mortal man be more just than God?
Shall a man be more pure than his maker?"

"These are the words of old Job; have they ever been surpassed?"

"One line from Solomon contains a volume of poetic thought: 'His banner over us is love,' " said Edgar Mills, looking out from his curtained seat in the window.

"Let me give you a paragraph of pure and perfect English," said the host, opening a volume of Milton. "It does not depend upon alliteration of words, nor the harmony of rhyme; but this old prince of poets stirs the soul with sad sympathy as we follow our first parents from the Eden-Paradise into the world of storms and wild beasts. In this closing paragraph, we have the very perfection of the highest art, a jewel imperishable as the soul itself:

" 'Some natural tears they dropped, but wiped them soon:

The world was all before them where to choose
Their place of rest, and Providence their guide.
They, hand in hand, with wandering steps and slow
Through Eden took their solitary way.' "

When Richard Kendrick closed the book from which he had been reading, Dr. Harding, appearing at the door of the music-room, quoted:

" 'Music the fiercest grief can charm,
And fate's severest rage disarm,
Music can soften pain to ease,
And make despair and *madness* please;
Our joys below it can improve,
And antidote the bliss above.'

"In the language of Pope, Mrs. Kendrick, I am commissioned to remind you that the musical members of your party are impatiently awaiting the fulfilment of your promise," and he offered her his arm.

Judge Johnson watched them pass into the music-room, and turned again to the discussion of poetical gems. "When Lord McCauley was first critic of England, he pronounced a verse of Mrs. Barbour's the most perfect specimen of a single verse ever written, and it was said that he would rather have been the author of it than to have written Homer's 'Iliad.' "

"Can you repeat it?" asked Richard Kendrick; "or shall I look it up in Bryant's collection?"

The Judge quoted:

" 'Life, we have been long together
Through pleasant and through stormy weather.
'Tis hard to part when friends are dear,—
Perhaps 'twill cost a sigh, a tear,
Then steal away, give little warning,
Choose thine own time,
Say not good-night, but in some brighter clime
Bid me good-morning.' "

"Have you anything from Shakespeare that will equal that, Mrs. Elliot?"

"Our club has done very thorough work in Shakespeare this year," replied the minister's wife. "Still, I dare not venture among his perfect gems to say which are diamonds and which are sapphires. His work is like nature herself, delving into the deepest mines and ocean caves for sparkling gems, and spreading them out as stars in the midnight sky, bidding us dare to say which is the brightest."

"True," said her husband. "In Shakespeare, we might glean from morn till night, like one roaming over vast prairie lands in summer time, when he views the outstretching acres of marigold and blue and crimson flowers tinging the atmosphere and sky with their gorgeous hues, and stopping at each step to find a rare and lovely blossom of delicate coloring

and shape, in turn to throw it aside to gather yet more beauties that plead for recognition."

"I like to wander in the workshop of Pope," said Judge Johnson, "and see him rasp and file his trenchant measures into rhythmic beauty; and, when amid so much or so many vulgar platitudes, we find a real gem, we are constrained to read and read again. I estimate the song, 'A Dying Christian to His Soul,' above 'The Universal Prayer,'"

"It's more orthodox," said Mr. Elliot, "and a favorite of mine."

"Give it, please," requested the host.

" 'Vital spark of heavenly flame
Quit, oh! quit this mortal frame,
Trembling, hoping, lingering, flying,
Oh the pain, the bliss of dying.
Cease fond nature, cease thy strife,
Let me languish into life.

" 'Hark! they whisper, angels say
Sister Spirit come away;
What is this absorbs me quite
Steals my senses, shuts my sight,
Drowns my spirit, draws my breath,
Tell me, my soul, can this be death?

" 'The world recedes, it disappears;
Heaven opens on my sight, my ears
With sounds seraphic ring.
Lend, lend your wings. I mount, I fly,
Oh grave, where is thy victory,
Oh, death, where is thy sting.'"

"It is indeed in the realms of the religious that the poets have been at their best," asserted Judge Johnson. "We shut our eyes to the blemished life of Lord Byron, and follow him in some of his grand-

est flights, as in the fourth canto of 'Childe Harold,' where the numbers seem to flow from some godlike hero of a mythological age. Yet, when his soul was chastened to sing some echoes of divine truth, as in the 'Destruction of Sennacherib,' we catch glimpses of the divine afflatus that make us wish the wanderings of Don Juan had been the record of a Christian pilgrimage; so, too, with Thomas Moore. The purest draught of the Castalian font never inspired in him truer poetic fire than was breathed out under the influence of religious thought, as in his soul-solacing hymns."

"Montgomery, Coleridge, and Campbell have gems of religious thought, too, that will shine while Christian fervor animates human hearts," said the Rev. Mr. Elliot.

"Coming down to our own century," continued Mr. Kendrick, "we have mines in our native land where gems of the purest water have been found."

"Sermons in books and stones in running brooks," read Edgar Mills, coming from behind the window drapery.

"Quote correctly, young man," said Judge Johnson.

"I have it from the Digest," laughed Edgar. "Things pungent. Miss Inez may give it—'As You Like It.' She's a member of the Shakespeare Club."

"Don't let him place any approbrium upon our club," encouraged Mrs. Elliot, smiling at Inez. "He should have crucified his quotation a little more by adding, 'tongues to tease.'"

"Finds tongues in trees, books in running brooks,
Sermons in stones and good in everything,"

—repeated Inez Ellis.

"As I was saying," began Richard Kendrick, "we find diamonds in Longfellow, pearls in Bryant, ru-

bies in Whittier; while Holmes, Lowell, and Poe bring up the collection in the casket till we have the whole catalogue of precious stones. We have hosts of American poets who have written verses that should have a place in the galaxy of song, and some future Bryant may yet more wisely choose of the purest and best."

"In the earlier days," added Judge Johnson, "when Holmes was yet young and Longfellow taught the language at Cambridge, Fitz-Green Halleck, Rodman Drake, Alice and Phoebe Cary, George D. Prentice, and other young poets that followed in their train and adorned the pages of the American newspapers, wrote many a poem that will be as immortal as the language. Prentice's lines at Cave Hill cemetery over the grave of his mother are as beautiful and have touches as truly poetic as any line of Gray's 'Elegy.' The tribute of Halleck to the memory of Drake is as tender as Byron's 'Farewell to Moore.'"

"Then, too," commented the minister, "there have appeared in our magazine literature many gems without a name, and yet they will live and be cherished by the lovers of true poetry. Let me give you a specimen, and, if you have ever had a taste of the font of Castalia, you will recognize the poetic soul finding the precious gem, but lacking the lapidary's art to dress and shapen, so its brilliance may appear:

" 'Birds are singing round my window,
Songs the sweetest ever heard—
And I hang my cage there daily,
But I never catch a bird.

" 'Thus my brain with thoughts is peopled
And they sing there all day long,
But they will not fold their pinions
In the little cage of song.'

"Isn't that a little pearl?"

"That's my experience exactly," said Edgar Mills. "The thoughts are here, flying in every direction, never forming into tangible shape or, perhaps I had better say, into acceptable poems, for I did write a poem once, and I was so sure that it was the inspiration of the muse, Erato, that I had it returned by twenty-seven magazines before I was convinced to the contrary."

"No doubt Erato inspired the theme, but Polyhymnia withheld her aid," laughed the minister. "Music is as essential as sentiment."

"Sacred words in a setting of lofty music is one of the strongest influences for good in the world," said Mrs. Harding, who had come into the library and stood with her hand on her brother's shoulder. "It brings the soul into communion with things most pure and holy. But the poet who comprehends the child nature and has a clear conception of the mysteries of a mother's heart, can touch a chord in the soul that vibrates with the keenest enjoyment, that peculiar pleasure that mingles the smile with the tear. In our last magazine is a gem of this kind. You read it, Brother." She opened to the page, saying: "It touches me too tenderly, for I have just started our little boys to school."

THE FAREWELL TO THE FAIRIES.

They came in the dusk and the darkness,
To the bed of the boy who had grown
From a wee, dimpled, golden-haired baby
To a lad who six summers had known.

They hovered above the fair sleeper,
Then into his dream drifted down,
And showed him the heart he was breaking,
Hearts of Fairies of childhood renown.

And first came the Prince and the Beauty,
Who slept in the magical Wood,
And roused the dear head from its slumbers,
As only the Fairy Prince could.

Then all of the fairies and goblins
Climbed up on the boy's little bed,
And kissed their good-byes to their playmates,
And all of their fare-ye-wells said.

The Babes in the Wood stood before him
And waved him a baby's adieu;
He saw them drift off through the forest,
Where robins then hid them from view.

And Jack, who murdered the Giant,
Would ever in Giant-land be,
"I'll cut it again at the bottom
And pull the stalks up after me."

And there stood the fair Cinderella
And blew him of kisses a score,
Then called for coach and her footman
And sped to the land of No More.

And dainty Red Riding-Hood stood there,
And tearfully bade him farewell,
Then wandered away through the Woodland,
Where the Wolf ate her up, he knew well.

Then Great Big and Big and the Wee Bears
Came tumbling down to his bed;
"Who milk from our bowls has been drinking,
We care now no more," the Bears said.

At last there was none save the sandman;
Just then did the fair head embark
Again on the ocean of slumber,
So the Sandman slipped off through the dark.

The dreamer awoke in the morning,
Hugged tight his new slate and his rule,
Nor saw the tear start as his mother
Sent him off on his first day of school.

The wee, dimpled, golden-haired baby,
Who once all the Fairies had known,
Had told her farewell like the Fairies,
To boyhood from babyhood grown.

Richard Kendrick closed the magazine and looked up at his sister. The poem had awakened responsive chords, tuned to different keys; a minor strain of disappointment; a major song of gratitude, childless and children. An embarrassing silence was saved by a movement toward the music-room, and Edgar Mills and Inez Ellis escaped from their alcove.

"Let's go into the drawing-room, away from so many people," begged Inez. "I'd rather look at pictures than quote poetry, because I can't remember correctly."

"Come look at this painting of Frith's and tell me who it's like," said Edgar, stopping before a copy of "The Rejected Poet."

Inez examined the painting without comment.

"Don't you remember the poet that Dr. Harding quoted a while ago?" asked Edgar.

"Yes; he quoted from Pope. Is the poet in this picture supposed to be Pope?" she asked. "Then, who is the lady?"

"It is Lady Mary Martley Montague," replied Edgar; "but it's not so much the prototype, as the counterpart, that interests me."

"That little Cupid and Psyche in the background constitute the prettiest part of the picture. I don't like the lady. She is beautiful; but she is mercilessly enjoying the poet's humiliation," said Inez.

"That's just the crux of the matter. Come, let

us find them in the music-room." Edgar led the way through groups standing or sitting in different parts of the rooms, or promenading through the hall.

"Listen! listen!" whispered Inez. "She is playing 'The Spinning Song' from the 'Flying Dutchman.' O such execution! It thrills me through and through."

"Now, were I to say that, you would think it was the player and not the playing that pleased me," teased Edgar.

"No, I wouldn't," replied Inez, trying to force back a tear. "I know that it is Mrs. Kendrick's personality that makes her music so exquisite."

"Yes, the atmosphere, the aura in the sound-waves, expressing the harmony and beauty of her character; it is that which exerts so powerful an influence," said Judge Johnson, softly.

Mrs. Kendrick finished her selection and clasped her dainty fingers in the silk folds of her skirt and remained in an attitude of absorption. The moment was one of exultation, an experience long to be remembered. Her guests—among whom were senators, judges, doctors, lawyers, and ministers—had forgotten their books, politics, and religion, fascinated with the wonderful technique of Wagnerian music. The silence was insistent, and she slipped her fingers back to the keyboard, and, for a moment, arpeggioed through soft minor chords and took up Chopin's "Revolutionary Etude." The wildest emotion of which the musical nature is capable was stirred by the dynamic shading of those deep, rumbling, rolling, full-toned legato runs, with here and there an accentuated gymnastic that surged up and down, threatening, daring, compelling, like the Poland nation fermenting an upheaval that would overthrow the oppression of the tyrant.

With only a pause between and a few modulating

chords, the hostess began "F Nocturne." She was gratified by hearing a sigh of relief and relaxed tension, but felt that a sadder, more tender emotion would vibrate in the hearts of those who could grasp the depth of melancholy and longing for the love and sympathy of the friend, which filled the soul of Chopin when he wrote this nocturne. A sensation of unalloyed happiness thrilled her as she rose from the piano, a lofty pride and loving appreciation.

The hour was late, and hasty "good-nights" and "perfectly lovely time," followed.

Walking home, Inez Ellis asked of her companion: "What did you mean by the counterpart to 'The Rejected Poet' picture? I forgot all about it when we heard the music."

"Forget it still," said Edgar Mills. "I was only joking."

"Then go on with your joke; or am I like the English, too slow to comprehend?" she replied.

"You knew the brother-in-law once tried to marry the sister, didn't you?" asked Edgar.

"Do you mean that Doctor Harding was in love with Mrs. Kendrick?"

"To put it plainly, yes—with Miss Mabel Murratt, now Mrs. Kendrick."

"O but she's nothing like the lady in the picture. She wouldn't laugh at his disappointment," averred Inez.

"Women do strange things. They were quoting poetry to each other before the guests arrived."

"It was harmless, if they were. I don't like you to talk that way. Those people are all perfectly lovely," pouted Inez.

"I didn't mean any harm. You know that I'm in love with our hostess myself," the boy replied.

Inez let go of his arm and walked apart.

"None of this, little girl," said Edgar. "You're the sweetest and prettiest and darlinest girlie in

the world, and the hardest to get along with. You ask questions and pout if I answer."

"O look at the moon coming from that cloud. Isn't it bright?" cried the girl.

"Yes, stand still a minute." The boy drew Inez's chiffon scarf close around her neck, and held her face up toward the moon, saying, "I would rather look at you with it 'luminating your face and eyes than——'"

"O hush, Edgar. Tell me what you see in the moon; not my face," she pulled away, laughing.

"Green cheese, of course," said he, demurely. "I hope I see something sweeter than that in your face."

"No, sir, not cheese. Your grandmother."

"Ah! ah! girlie. Don't say you never used slang. I'll report you to the Shakespeare Club," teased the boy.

"Shakespeare used slang, and I don't. Grandmother isn't slang," she averred. "Now listen to what Longfellow said about the moon in 'Hiawatha':

"Once a warrior very angry
Seized his grandmother and he threw her,
Up into the sky he threw her —
Right against the moon he threw her,
'Tis her image that you see there.'

"Is there any slang in that?"

The incorrigible boy replied: "Your grandmother is slang. Longfellow isn't. I thought you couldn't repeat poetry."

"I can't, much. I wish you would recite the poem you sent to the magazine," she asked.

"I'll say it to you if you will promise to believe it," he stated.

"I'll try; but I must hear it first," she said.

"We're too near home. It's long. May I come

round to-morrow evening and repeat it? Thank you, expect me."

Mr. and Mrs. Kendrick and Mrs. Harding stood on the broad veranda and watched Judge Johnson, the last of the departing guests, as he went down the tile walk, and, lifting his hat, disappear past the lion couchant on the marble pillow.

"Come, Richard, let's go over and look at the boys. It was so dear of them to send their mamma with kisses for me to-night," asked Mabel Kendrick, gathering up her skirts.

"I'm very tired, dear, and have some important letters to write before I can go to bed," replied her husband. "The boys are asleep."

"They're such beauties asleep; little Richard especially. Come, please, just over and back immediately," she pleaded.

"Come, Brother, I'll not let you take time to sit down," urged Mrs. Harding, yet feeling a deep sympathy for her brother, knowing that he would be willing to give all his wealth, could he have one boy of his own.

Dr. Harding was sauntering back and forth on the lawn, with a lowering brow and clenched hands. He was harking back to the time when he believed he could have married this beautiful woman, instead of the homely mother of his children. He had been mistaken in his impression that Luella Kendrick's was the largest individual fortune in the city; and, when her brother married the girl that he really loved, it was hard for him to separate her from the object of his hatred. The knowledge that Mabel loved his children, stirred his heart to its blackest depths. Then, too, the fact that they were happy and he a disappointed man, awakened the most wicked impulses of his tyrannical nature. His early and absorbing ambition had been to be the social leader of this city's "four hundred"; and he had let

avarice turn him in the wrong track. With his plain, uncomely wife, he could scarcely hold secondary place. He knew that she was good; he had daily manifestations of her patience; but he would rather have had her brilliant and devilish, than good and tiresome. He had no pride in his boys because they were goody-goody like their mother. Could he have known the disappointment and sadness in Richard Kendrick's heart, his bitterness would have had some amelioration.

"Aren't they little beauties," gushed Mabel, kissing the boys gently, as they lay sleeping in their soft, white bed.

"Don't you wish little Richard was yours?" asked Richard Kendrick, looking at his wife with tender affection.

"No, indeed. I could not love them then. They would worry me to death. You're all the boy I want." She took his face in her hands and kissed him rapturously.

Luella Harding stooped over her boys and a tear fell as she kissed their flushed cheeks. It had been a long time since she dared offer an impulsive caress to her husband; though she never complained or tried to understand why he was so cold and unresponsive. She simply prayed to be worthy of him and her boys.

"Good-night, Doctor," said Richard, passing Harding in the hall, as they came from the nursery. "I envy you your two fine boys." Luella followed her brother to the lawn.

"They are such lovable little tots," said Mabel, tenderly.

"They are not so very little. Dick may be small for an eight-year-old; but Tom will be a large man," replied Dr. Harding, holding Mabel's hand in a strong clasp.

"Eight years old! O yes; I remember now. He was born the year we were married," began Mabel.

"And we could not attend the wedding." The Doctor looked deep into her lustrous eyes, hoping for an expression that he could not find.

"When you were married, we all went to the Centennial at Philadelphia. That was six months after dear mamma's illness," said Mabel, softly.

"And the Judge told me you would be left moneyless," sneered the Doctor.

"You forget that we 'buried the hatchet' when we decided to build our new homes side by side. Why can't you be a good brother instead of always digging up old scores and pretending to be disappointed and miserable," she said, reprovingly.

"Come, Mabel, I am keeping Luella out here in the dew," called Richard from the lawn.

"Good-night," and Mabel offered her hand to the Doctor again.

"All right, Sister, I'll try to keep the hatchet out of sight. Good-night." He impulsively caught her to him and kissed her cheek.

Mabel Kendrick ran out on the lawn, threw one arm around Luella and the other around her husband, and, drawing them together, said: "Kiss your brother, Luella, and come over in the morning and help me decide about my guests for the theatre-party."

Richard pressed his lips to his sister's forehead tenderly, and, gathering his wife's skirts, carefully lifted her to his breast and carried her over the dewy grass.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BERNADOTTE BALL.

The last winter had been a full, and to most, a happy one; but it was meagre in comparison with the extravagant social functions planned for the coming season. Mrs. Kendrick had been the society leader in arranging for three separate courses of amusement and entertainment. Her personal attractions and great wealth, and the political influence of her husband, who had risen to the honorable position of City Mayor, gave her almost unlimited power. The manager of the Metropolitan Theatre was to provide five or six weeks of grand opera, in which Neilson, Lucca, Patti, and other stars were to sing, also a series of musicales, where the virtuosos, Paderewski, Rubinstein, Ole Bull, and Von Bulow were to play. Furthermore, there was a lecture course, for which Dr. Robinson, Stanton, G. W. Bain, Henry Watterson, and Oliver Wendell Holmes were engaged. The crowning event of the season, however, was to be a grand ball in honor of the Right Honorable Knight of the Royal North Star of Sweden, Bernadotte, who was to visit this country. The women were in a fever of delightful anticipation over this affair. The elegance of the dresses ordered from Paris had filled Worth with enthusiastic pride. Those who did not receive an invitation to this party, knew that they were doomed to social oblivion henceforth.

Little circles were formed, quietly, to read up

on Scandinavian history, that they might be conversant with the Bernadotte dynasty in that romantic land. Grieg's music was studied by most of the musicians in the city. Corelli's novels and Björnson's stories were read and discussed.

"The plans for the building are in the hands of the architect, Mrs. Kendrick, and we have about secured the necessary funds," said Judge Johnson.

The carriage containing the two friends and Mrs. Harding was returning from the city park near which the building was to be erected for the Bernadotte Ball.

"Do you think we shall have sufficient money to carry out all my designs for decorations? I want the Nixy's chord illustrated above the orchestra. The mystery of that wonderful violinist, as Björnson portrays him, will be an inspiration to our musicians. On pedestals in the reception room, there must be statues of Thor, Woden, and Frigga, and, on the rostrum, I want Oscar II with his Bible in his hand, emblematic of the Christian king," planned Mabel Kendrick.

"A Bible in a ball-room," laughed Luella Harding.

"You don't suppose any of us would dance if we thought it was wrong, do you, Luella?" Mabel replied. "Still, I'm more concerned about getting a good likeness of the king, than I am about the Bible."

"If the Right Honorable Knight of the North Star of Sweden does not recognize his Christian monarch, he will not appreciate your statues," said Luella, still smiling.

"You are not enthusiastic, Mrs. Harding," said the Judge. "The city is indebted to your sister-in-law for the honor of this royal visit. I sincerely hope nothing will occur to mar her pleasure in it."

"I never knew Luella to be enthusiastic about

anything but her children," said Mabel, good-naturedly.

They stopped in front of their home, and the boys came running and begging for a ride.

"Aunt Mabel, take us in, won't you please, and let me sit with the driver. Please take us, Aunt Mabel," begged Richard, the older.

"You'll not throw the driver out and take the reins yourself?" questioned Mabel, smiling at the boys.

"Not if you'll let me drive you all alone when I'm strong enough to hold the team," the boy replied, seriously.

"Of course I shall, my little lover. Tommy, get in with Judge Johnson. We'll take him to his hotel," said Mrs. Kendrick.

"Don't ask for any longer ride this time," the mother urged.

"Must we go by the office and get papa?" questioned Tommy, reluctantly.

"Perhaps we had better," his mother replied.

"My, but these are bully horses! I wish you lived farther away," said Tommy as the rig stopped at the Judge's hotel.

"You do?" asked Judge Johnson, assuming an injured air.

"I mean," stammered the little fellow, "I wish we could have a longer ride before we reached your place."

"Thank you, sir. Command me, ladies, whenever I can be of service," said the Judge, as he left the carriage.

"Thank you; au revoir," and Mabel waved a farewell.

"Why are you so sober, dear?" asked Mabel, turning to Luella, after she had directed the driver to call at the Doctor's office. "You're not feeling well, I know; but you will be all right and well

again before the ball. Besides, you must not worry. It's bad for you."

Luella forced back the tears and replied: "I don't care very much for the ball except on the Doctor's account. He is so vexed with me."

"Just as though you were to blame."

"No, no," interrupted Luella, "I don't think he blames me; but he would like to have me dress more, entertain, and go out with him."

"But he knows you have always been a great home body," said Mabel. "Richard says he wishes some scientist would invent a contrivance in which he could place his wife and sister, and, by some kind of crux, make a composite whole, which, divided, would so separate the component parts as to make a wife less absorbed in the grand things of living and a sister less in love with her own domesticity."

"And what does Thomas think?" asked Luella.

"O the Doctor thinks you are too good, and I am too bad," laughed Mabel.

The carriage stopped in front of the Doctor's office. "Go up and get your papa, boys. We shall wait here," said Mrs. Harding.

"You go, Dick; I don't want to," said Tommy.

"No, you go, Tom, I have to watch the horses," Richard objected.

"Both of you go," gently commanded the mother.

"They piled out of the carriage and started on a race down the street, crying: "O yonder's Uncle Richard."

Mabel smiled into Luella's sad face, saying: "Children, like dogs, recognize a friend by instinct."

While they were waiting for the return of the children, a messenger came down from the office to say that Dr. Harding has seen them waiting; but he would not be able to go home until later. He was busy in some important experiments. When the boys returned, they each had a bag of confections

and a new toy. Tommy's was a solid rubber ball with which Richard and his nephews teased the women as they drove home, by tossing the ball up at an angle that would enable them to catch it descending when they drove under it. The horses were stopped half a dozen times between the office and the avenue, and Richard took his turn in getting out after the ball.

"There is a party going up the river in the launch to-morrow night and have supper on the beach," said Dr. Harding to his wife, a few weeks later. "I want you to go. Leave the boys with their nurse."

"Thomas, I'd rather you would take the boys and leave me at home; I'm not in a condition to go," replied Luella.

"There will be no young people but that rattle-brained Edgar Mills and Inez Ellis and a couple of their friends. Besides, I can't be annoyed with Dick and Tommy. But, of course, you have more consideration for your own comfort than for my pleasure."

His wife never replied to a taunt, but answered gently: "If it is cool, and I can wear my loose silk coat, I will go."

Mrs. Harding waited until her husband had gone to his office. Then, knowing that Mabel could manage to have the boys included in the picnic party, she ran over to her brother's home. She found her sister-in-law reclining in a Morris-chair, a silk wrapper falling loosely about her lace-encased ankles, a mass of rich Duchess lace caressing her soft white throat, and a chiffon scarf, which fell across her breast, rising and falling with the throbs of deep emotion. There was sorrow and rebellion in the expression of her beautiful face. She was crushing the petals of an American-beauty rose, while tears flooded her large eyes.

"Why, Mabel!" said Luella. "What can be the matter? You in trouble! I never found you so before."

Mabel Kendrick could not control her voice sufficiently to trust herself to speak. As she looked at Luella, standing before her, in unshapely condition, her beauty-loving, esthetic nature revolted at the remembrance of the punishment that God pronounced on Eve for her sin of coveting greater knowledge, when He said: "In sorrow shalt thou——"

"I am continually coming to you with my troubles, Sister; let me share your burden once," Luella urged, drawing up a rocker. "I know it can only be some little vexation. Has any one interfered with your plans for the royal ball?" There was no reply. "Have the children made any more trouble? Dick is very unhappy because he broke your Grecian vase."

"It was not Dick's fault more than mine. My trouble is your trouble," said Mabel, uncertainly.

"You dear, good girl; I should have known you were thinking of me. Did Thomas tell you that he wished me to go with the launch party to-morrow? Could there be anything more unpleasant for me?"

Mabel had been on the point of confiding in her sister-in-law, but the moment had passed. "You are not going, are you?" she asked.

"I presume I shall have to go; and I wish I could take the boys along. Can't you intercede for them?"

"I'll send a special invitation to them to go as my escort; for Richard has gone to Chicago on business and will not be at home. I should not go, sister, if I were in your place, unless I wanted to," Mabel said positively.

"If you had Thomas for a husbnad, I think you would," replied Luella, trying to smile.

"I don't think so. You began wrong. You have given up to him all your life; and, of course, just

now, you are not strong enough to resist his will," insisted Mabel.

"Did you ever know any one to hold out against him when he determines on a thing? I never have. Where the boys get their lovely disposition is a mystery to me." Mrs. Harding's eyes beamed fondly as she watched her offsprings bounding over the lawn, returning from school.

"They are like their Uncle Richard. He has the dearest disposition. This will be a lonely night without him." Again Mabel choked down a sob and tears overflowed.

"I must hasten home or the boys will be in after me," and Luella rose to go.

"Send the Doctor over when he comes home, and I shall ask him to let the boys go with me to-morrow," Mabel suggested.

"I'll ask him to come. You know I appreciate what you do for me, dear."

Left alone, Mabel buried her face in her hands, and tear after tear trickled through her fingers. The maid came and announced supper and was told to bring some toast and tea; she would not go out to the dining-room as Mr. Kendrick was absent. When the maid reported that her mistress was so lonely that she was crying her eyes red, the cook would not believe her. When the cook was convinced with her own eyes, the chore-boy wanted some advice about the carriage house; so he, too, could see the phenomenon. Then the gardener, hearing the report, gathered a bunch of roses, which he carried to his mistress. She took the flowers, and, smiling, thanked the kind old man; still, her eyes were full of grief and anger.

While Dr. Harding was finishing his evening meal, his wife said to him: "I was talking with Mabel——"

"Did she tell you not to go to-morrow?" he in-

terruted. "How often must I say it is against my wishes that you discuss with her our family affairs."

"I've said that I would go and have no thought of changing my mind, if it keeps as cool as it is to-night. Mabel was saying that she doesn't want to go alone. Richard is in Chicago and——"

"If Mabel stays at home, no one shall go," abruptly interposed the Doctor.

"O, Mabel intends going, I think. Can't you go over and see her before you return to the office?" She knew he was pleased for the opportunity to talk with Mabel, and she was grateful for every occasion that brought him under her influence; it made him more patient with the boys and less severe with her. Still, she was unable to comprehend his attitude toward her brother's wife. He seemed possessed of a composite passion as strong in hate as in love. Luella loved and trusted her sister-in-law; but all affection for the father of her children was lost in the dread emotion of fear.

The boys overheard the project of the launch trip, and, as soon as their father was out of sight, they began: "Mamma, can't we go? Please get us to go."

"If Aunt Mabel asked you to go as her escorts, will you be good and not annoy anybody?"

"Yes, Mamma, we will. I guess we will; O won't it be jolly! We'll keep far away from Papa," cried Dick.

"But we're going with Aunt Mabel, and Papa—he'll be in our way," worried Tommy.

"Go do some extra practising now, so you will be prepared for your music lesson day after to-morrow. Don't worry over the picnic until you are sure of going," said Mrs. Harding.

Mabel Kendrick had seen the Doctor come home, and, while he was at dinner, she went to her room, put aside her wrapper, bathed her face, rearranged

her hair, and, in a becoming afternoon gown of gray silk grenadine, with accessories of pale pink, she sought the library, her husband's favorite haunt. Here Richard spent most of his unbusied hours, reading and studying his cherished poets. Here his wife came when he was absent; for she could feel his presence among his books. The atmosphere was pregnant with his personality. She was aroused from an effort to pen some rhymes by the entrance of her brother-in-law. She leaned against the cushion of a large chair, waiting.

Dr. Harding came in a side entrance, through the dining-room, across the parlor, hoping he would find her in the drawing-room. He did not like the library; but the other rooms were in consonance with Mabel. He glanced at the artistic decorations, at the delicate taste in bric-a-brac, a statue here, a picture there, the voluptuousness of the rich carpets. Her handkerchief lay on the floor. He picked it up and experienced that inevitable dualism that possessed his nature when touched by the electric aura of this beautiful woman. He could not have told which feeling was stronger; admiration or envy of the casket; love or hate for the jewel it held. His soul was on fire; but years of effort had given him the mastery of himself. He retraced his steps to the library.

"Writing poetry?" he questioned.

"Trying to," she smiled up at him.

"Let me see what you were thinking of," and he reached for the paper on which she had been scribbling.

She crumpled it in her hand, saying: "No, you'd think it very silly; but it's very true with me."

"Don't destroy it, please," he pleaded.

"Come sit down, I want to talk with you. Must you hurry?" and she drew a chair forward for him.

"Never hurry when your wishes are concerned,"

He looked into her eyes, and a puzzled expression slowly crept into his face.

Mabel dropped her lashes and a flush flashed over her countenance. Forcing a bright smile, she said: "I have two favors to ask of you; but I must not spring them too suddenly, lest I be disappointed. First, let us talk about the Knight's ball."

"Never mind the ball. What can I do for you?" impatiently demanded the Doctor.

"Perhaps it is concerning the ball that I am most interested; in fact, it is," she asserted sweetly.

"You do not need me," objected the Doctor, "with Judge Johnson, Edgar Mills, your committee of ten men and a dozen women. Isn't that sufficient force? Besides, the Mayor."

"O Richard is so occupied with city reform I can't bother him," said Mabel. "But Judge Johnson says the arrangements will be consummated and the program sure of success."

"Then what do you wish me to do? Take the Mayor's place on the reception committee?" asked the Doctor, ironically.

"Well, no; but suppose I should be disabled and could not preside with Richard, or occupy my position as chairman of the Woman's Committee, who could take my place?" she asked.

"The only alternative that I would advise would be to telegraph to the Right Honorable Knight of the North Star of Sweden to remain in the land of the midnight sun," laughed the Doctor.

"He may be on his way to America now. And it's no laughing matter with me. I have never planned anything since I have been married that I look forward to with such pure pleasure. I almost feel like I would rather die than give it up for any other purpose," she sighed deeply.

Dr. Harding had detected some little changes in the soft beauty of her fair skin, and was beginning

to comprehend her vexation, but wished to force her to be explicit in expressing her wish. His sensuous nature enjoyed a conversation bordering on so delicate a theme.

"I'm waiting," he said.

"Waiting! For what?" She had forgotten.

"For your two requests," he replied.

"O, one is, I want Richard and Tommy to accompany me on the launch ride to-morrow; for I can't go without them, as Richard is in Chicago," she stated.

"I had intended taking them with me, as their mother wants to stay at home; but you can have the boys, and I shall look after Mrs. Elliot, since the Reverend can't go. Will that suit you?" he asked.

"Delighted! Thank you very much. The boys and I shall have a gay time," she replied.

These trips up the river with supper on the beach had been among the most delightful times of the summer. It was invigorating to get away from the proper conditions and staid conventionalities of the city and breathe the country air, paddle in the water, and play like rustic children. This was the middle of the excursion season.

The Doctor sat nervously tic-tacking on the table. Mabel, leaning against her cushions, watched the window curtains fold in and out as the west wind played with them. She was thinking seriously, trying to see a way through which she could make him understand what she wanted and induce him to accomplish her desire.

Still, he waited, and, his better nature dominant, he was content simply to be near her. In sotto voice he asked gently: "Are you asleep, Mabel?"

She turned toward him with a ravishing smile, and, like a little child, said: "I don't know how to tell you what I want to."

"Would it help you were I to tell you that I know what the trouble is?" With a compelling smile he leaned toward her and held her eyes; her cheeks crimsoned. "But I do not know what you wish me to do."

"Tell me what to do that will prevent a personal condition that would keep me from presiding at the Grand Ball during the holidays," she pleaded.

For a moment he felt very tender toward her. His pulse quickened, his nerves tingled. "Isn't it too soon to worry?" he whispered.

"What we do, must be done at once; for Richard must never know. He suspects nothing, yet." Her eyes were humid as she looked appealingly up at the Doctor, who had risen abruptly.

Reference to Richard was unfortunate. The libidinous pleasure in the conversation was destroyed by the influence of his name. The dualistic nature revolved, leaving hate uppermost. He walked rapidly across the room, saying to himself: "You and Richard, you two to preside in all the pomp and glory of the occasion to entertain Bernadotte, that the fame of your beauty and honor may be sent across the ocean, while I take a modest seat and Luella uncomplainingly goes through what you are trying to avoid. Am I to be a dupe and a fool and violate my medical integrity and shield Richard from even the annoyance of the knowledge of your scheme——"

"What are you thinking? Doctor, your countenance has so completely changed. Have I said anything to offend you? Indeed, I am most grateful to you; for you have always been kind to Richard and me." She took his hand and gently pulled him toward the chair near her.

"I was thinking of Luella. She, too, will be disappointed in the winter's festivities." He tried to look kind.

"No, indeed!" replied Mabel, relieved. "Luella says she will be perfectly happy if only you are pleased."

"Pleased, yes, if I were more domestic in my taste. Luella cares nothing for the æsthetics of the fashionable world. Social aggrandizement doesn't appeal to her as it does to you. It must have been the opposite characteristics in your natures that made you fast friends when you were school girls," mused the doctor.

"We have always been good friends; she was a better student than I was in college," acknowledged Mabel Kendrick, "and has more brains than I have now. You don't half appreciate her."

"She is intellectual," agreed the doctor, "but what pleasure can she find in hiding her light under a bushel?"

"Haven't you learned yet, brother, that there is more real pleasure in the enjoyment of one's self, in the knowledge of one's own ability to grasp and to know and to feel, than can be found in the make-believe of the world around you?" asked Mabel Kendrick.

"That is an unique question from you, sister, whose life is floating always on the topmost wave of popularity, and who, even now, plan for one more grand display of personal charms?" replied Dr. Harding.

An expression of fear and apprehension passed over her countenance leaving it very sad, as she replied: "I have a presentiment that this may be my last. So help me to make it the greatest of all my successes, won't you, please?" Her eyes were humid as she looked into the searching gaze of the doctor.

"Then what shall be my pay?" he asked.

"The same that you have always received for your excellent care of our health—the love and gratitude

of a sister." She rose and moved away from him. The paper on which she had been scribbling fell to the floor.

The doctor picked up the paper and looked at Mabel questioningly.

She endeavored to take it from his hand, saying, "I was lonely and amused myself with rhyming. Please don't read it."

"That is just what I intend doing," he said, holding her at arm's length and gazing into her eyes.

There was something repugnant in his expression and she drew away from him, saying, "If it will amuse you to read my simple rhyme, I don't care."

"I'm interested to know what occupies your thoughts, when you are all alone."

She stood smiling as he turned to the window and read:

HOW I LOVE MY HUSBAND.

I love him with my speaking eyes
And with my lips, I love him—
With love that only underlies
My love to heaven above him.

I love him in the rosy dawn,
And as the daylight brightens;
I love him more when day is gone,
And stars the night would lighten.

I love him morning, noon, and night,
When evening shades grow longer,
And stars appear; they only show
How much my love is stronger.

When sun and moon and stars shall wane,
My love no power shall sever,
I love in life, in death the same,
Forever and forever.

He read to the end bewildered; he had hoped for something different; and, with each line, he formed a deeper resolve to be revenged on this couple, who had robbed him of love and filled his soul with hate. He saw within his power visions too dark to paint in words. The Grand Ball should be his opportunity, a disappointment for her with no ameliorating compensation.

"Well, didn't I say that you would think it foolish?" she smilingly asked.

"It's a pretty fair bit of rhyming," he politely responded. "You should make a new copy, then paste it in his Bible or dictionary."

"You're *very* kind. Richard shall never see it, and if he should he would not make fun of it, as you are doing," she laughed.

"You misjudge me, Mabel. Your wifely sentiments are very neatly expressed. But you have something more difficult to accomplish than writing poetry, and I am not yet certain as to how I should advise you. Get out in the open air as much as you can. Take a long walk occasionally," he hesitated, she waited. "Vigorous exercise"—he came close to her, and for the first time during their intercourse, she experienced a strong sensation of loathing and disgust; but she replied, calmly:

"That will not be difficult, for I like to walk. Is there nothing else——?"

"Be patient till I see you again." He turned toward the music room as he heard the scuffling of his sons, who had come in, impatient to learn the result of the picnic scheme. A new feeling had taken possession of Mabel, and she wished the interview ended.

"Confound those boys," said the doctor, as he abruptly left the house.

Mabel cordially welcomed her nephews.

"Can we go, Aunt Mabel, can we go?" they chorused.

"Yes," she replied, kissing them heartily.

"We're awfully glad, Aunt Mabel, and we'll do everything you want us to," said Dick.

"Then let me lie on this couch and rest, and you boys play for me. Don't talk. Play your duets until you are tired, and then slip away, for I may be asleep, and we'll have a jolly good time to-morrow."

"You're right, we will." They sang as they took their seat at the piano.

A merry crowd gathered at the landing the next evening, to take a launch ride up the river. They had buckets of ice-water, milk and cream, coffee and a coffee-kettle, and baskets of provisions in abundance; fishing-tackle, a canvas tent, and bathing suits galore.

Dr. Harding had said at the breakfast-table: "I'll take the boys and leave you at home, Luella, if you don't want to go."

"Thank you; I would rather remain at home," she replied.

Several miles above the city, where the banks are high on both sides of the river and the hills rise like little mountains in the distance, they stopped the machinery of the launch and floated quietly on the water, to enjoy the echo and see who could get the clearest response.

"Coo-coo," called Mrs. Kendrick. "Coo-coo," came back from the bank; and again, "Coo-coo" from the hill beyond.

"Who are you?" called Dick. "Oo are you?" came back the double echo, first from the nearer side of the river, then from the farther.

"Are you well?" called Edgar Mills. "Are you 'ell?" came the echo as clear as the voice that gave the first call.

"When we have it clearly illustrated that the words we utter go from us until they meet with an obstruction that sends them back, how careful ought we to be with our words, which are constantly going to heaven with no hills to turn them back," suggested Mrs. Elliot, the minister's wife.

"It's all right if we use good words," Dick declared.

"I'm glad there are no mountains in the skies to repeat my words," Edgar Mills added.

"You couldn't flirt with two pretty girls at once then," intimated Mrs. Kendrick, smiling.

"There are mountains of clouds," Tommy observed.

"Clouds may thunder, but not echo," said Inez.

In an hour they had landed on the beach, and all entered heartily into putting up the tent, making a bonfire, preparing to bathe, and selecting a spot for the supper to be spread. After the duties were performed, each did precisely as he pleased: went swimming, sat on the shore and richotted stones, climbed the banks, walked to the top of a promontory, hunted wish-stones, read a magazine, or stretched himself on a log and slept. Mabel Kendrick, with Dick and Tom, did everything that the others did, excepting the resting; and, when they started home, she was so tired she could scarcely move. Her cheeks were red and her eyes bright, and she knew she had given the boys the jolliest day of the year, and hoped she had accomplished something for herself.

Dr. Harding gave her his hand to assist her into the boat and said softly: "You have almost overdone yourself in exercising to-day."

"You and Dick and Tommy are the youngest in the crowd," laughed Mrs. Elliot.

"The moon like a rick on fire is rising over the dale," Inez Ellis quoted.

"And splash, splash, splash in the waves behind us, sparkle her rays in our trail," parodied Edgar Mills.

"Was there ever anything more glorious than moonlight on the Ohio!" gushed Inez's friend.

"Yes; moonlight on Mrs. Kendrick's face," teased Edgar.

Edgar Mills was a young man of eighteen, an only son in a family of wealth and influence. His three sisters, much older than himself, were married; one lived in the East, the other two west of the Rockies. He had been reared in an atmosphere of kindness, petted though not spoiled. He was one of the indispensables, always to be depended on, ever ready to take a hand or fill a set, complete a circle, or escort a friend, and one that could be trusted. He sustained intimate relations with married women without annoyance to husbands; he was devoted to the girls without encouraging matrimonial hopes among their mothers. He was affectionate, generous, handsome, with a fair quota of brains, but never taken seriously, though considered capable and influential; and he loved his mother and—Inez Ellis.

A few days after the picnic Edgar Mills was driving his pony cart in from the country, when he was surprised by the appearance of a pedestrian on the dusty road. He stopped his pony with the greeting: "Is it possible! Mrs. Kendrick! Is it really you walking out here?"

"It is I, Mr. Ellis. The trees and the skies got into my veins the day of the picnic, and I'm wild for the country. I'm going to walk to Cedar Grove and sit on the grass and rest, and walk back again," she replied.

"I don't believe you can endure such a long walk. Let me drive you out there, please?"

"No, thank you. Company would spoil my mood.

I want to be alone with nature and listen to the birds and the bees," she insisted.

"And hunt snakes and lizards. Why don't you go to the city parks? There are flowers and trees and birds and no harmful animals," he argued.

"But there are people there, and I'd be sure to see some one with whom I'd have to talk. The walk, principally, and to be alone, is what I wish to-day." She smiled with something more than seriousness in her face.

"Then you want me to leave you, of course. Good-bye. Hadn't I better come back in two hours and meet you?" he asked uncertainly.

"No, thank you, good-bye," and she started up the road.

"That's a mystery," said Edgar Mills to himself, as he let his pony jog along. "By the time she gets back she will have walked over six miles this warm morning. Well, I can't fathom it! and that dolorous expression that her forced smile did not conceal—I saw it once on the beach."

He chucked up his pony, thinking of the woman that he had passed, recalling her image when she stood apart from the crowd after the lunch on the beach, looking into space, her skirts soiled from climbing the bank, her delicate fingers bruised from holding to rocks and limbs in the ascent, her hair disarranged by the wind, her cheeks aflame from exercise, and her eyes moist with some conflict within. Now, again, she was acting in the extreme. Could it be that some grievous vexation had come to mar her beautiful, peaceful home, and she was trying to run away from it?

Later he strolled down the avenue and saluted Dr. Harding as he came from his dwelling to get into his buggy.

"Which way, Doctor?"

"South. Anything I can do for you?"

"Are you going as far as Jones's, the man who has pneumonia?" Edgar inquired.

"I am," said the Doctor.

"His son-in-law promised to do some work for mother. Would you spare time to ask if he can come this week? I started to see him and forgot about it," said Edgar.

"You're not usually forgetful," replied the Doctor. "It will be no trouble to see him for you, if he's there."

"He just moved there last week. He did live out east, where I went this morning, and found he had moved. By the way, I met Mrs. Kendrick walking out to Cedar Grove."

"Walking to Cedar Grove!" ejaculated the Doctor, for a moment surprised.

Edgar Mills went on down the avenue, concluding that Dr. Harding knew no more than he knew. He would have formed a different opinion could he have heard the Doctor's soliloquy as he drove away. "The devil and damnation—she will beat me yet—and she has taken a double dose, too. Well, if she is proof against that performance, I'm safe. Damn it! I'll not let her walk back."

He whipped his horse, skirted the town, and striking the east road, took up the speed he travelled when some worthy patient was dying. When he reached the park, there was no one in sight, and his anger rose against Edgar Mills. He alighted to examine the tracks. His horse, trained to do his master's bidding, did not require hitching. Inside the gate the Doctor saw some rose-petals, and, a short distance beyond, he seemed to distinguish, through the underbrush, two figures, standing and apparently talking. At once, he was possessed with a wild, inordinate jealousy; and, turning down a lane, he came to a ravine that formed a creek during rainy seasons. He kept along under the bank, intending to come up

on the couple unawares. Should they be the people he suspected, well——. Otherwise, he could be hunting geological specimens. With several small stones in his hands, he rose suddenly and saw Mabel, alone, lying on the grass. His pulse was throbbing, and his heart bounding, and, even through green eyes, he noticed how perfectly beautiful she was, and how extremely sad. The moment she saw him, every impulse left her but that of anger. She sprang to her feet and faced him, trembling with passion.

"Did you follow me?" she demanded.

"Who was here talking to you?" he demanded in turn.

"What right have you to know?" she sneered.

"What brought you here?"

"My horse." He realized that he had nothing to gain by expostulations, and, in a more conciliatory tone, he continued: "Edgar Mills saw me starting to the country and told me you were here, and I have come to ask you to ride back with me."

"You told me to take long walks, and, knowing that, you should not have interfered," she spoke with less anger.

"But you are overdoing. Do you want to kill yourself?" he asked tenderly.

"No," she said uncertainly. "Though I'd rather die than—than—not be able to preside at the reception."

"That's better. Be careful of your sentences. Come, let us go home," he urged.

"Ride with you! No, indeed. What would Edgar Mills think of me, refusing to ride with him and then meeting you out here? I resent your coming. Ride back with you, no sir!" she cried.

"It will wear a better face to have met your brother-in-law than some stranger." He watched her closely and with such evident suspicion that, despite her anger toward him, she laughed merrily.

He thought her mirth was forced to cover her confusion. However, he was so determined that she should ride home—and not, by another long walk, hasten a catastrophe that would disarrange his plans—that he dropped the subject of the unknown person and begged her to ride home with him.

“I will not,” she spoke positively.

“Very well, then, come with me to the buggy, please; for I must go.” He drew her hand through his arm.

Neither spoke while they walked around the shrubbery and out near the horse. She let go of his arm and turned toward the road, surprised that she had really convinced him that she would go as she pleased. Before she was aware of his design, he caught her in his arms and lifted her to the seat beside him, and gave the rein to his horse. She was so angry she could neither speak nor see. They covered two miles in a very few minutes. Then, the ridiculousness of the situation, the humor of the Doctor’s audacity, took possession of her, and, reflecting on her own helplessness in case he should not continue his agency until the consummation of her wishes, she gave herself up to the acceptance of the inevitable with a charming grace.

“If we meet Edgar Mills, I’ll tell him that you kidnapped me,” she said with her natural naivete of manner. “But where are you going? Why do you turn off here?”

“I have a call to make south of the city, and it is a full twelve miles across, but we can make it at this speed,” he said.

“Don’t kill your horse driving so fast. I’m not going to jump out,” she said good-naturedly.

Dr. Harding made a hurried professional call, delivered Mrs. Mills’s message, and they reached home in time for the noon lunch, and congratulated

themselves that they did not meet Edgar Mills. All to no purpose, however; for, when the gardener came to do the work for Mrs. Mills, he incidentally spoke of Mrs. Kendrick being with the Doctor when he called, and Edgar thought to himself: "The mystery deepens."

At a social function a few days after Richard Kendrick's return from Chicago, he met Edgar Mills, and, among other comments, he said: "I hope you did not neglect Mrs. Kendrick while I was away."

Edgar replied: "She would not let me be good to her. When she walked out to Cedar Grove, I asked her to ride with me, and she turned me down." He watched for the expression of surprise, but was disappointed.

In truth, Richard did not grasp the fact until later. Walking home with his wife from the party, he asked: "Did I understand Edgar to say that you *walked* to Cedar Grove, while I was gone?"

"Yes," she replied uncertainly. "We had the river picnic one evening, and I fell so in love with the trees and the flowers that I wanted to see the woods all alone, so I walked out. Edgar told Dr. Harding that I had gone, and he drove out and made me ride back with him." Notwithstanding her desperate effort to speak naturally, she knew she was betraying her nervous condition of mind. "I was very angry with him for following me; I wanted the walk."

"He is your physician, dear, and knows what is best for you. Wouldn't it be better to take your maid when you go walking?" he asked gently.

"I would not like to require her to walk so far," she replied.

"She is stronger than you are, and can endure much more," he answered.

"I don't suppose I shall feel in a mood for a

long walk again. If you had been at home, doubtless I would not have thought of going," she sighed.

"We shall go together, whenever you feel like walking. My business and pleasure are secondary to your happiness," said her husband, gently stroking the gloved hand that rested on his arm.

The summer days grew shorter. Preparations for the winter's festivities, and the Bernadotte Ball especially, occupied the thoughts of the pleasure-seekers. Travellers were returning from the lakes and coasts and continental tours. Housewives were busy with fall fruitage; homes were being renovated and house-cleaning expedited. The city was aglow with the American love of home.

"Dr. Harding," said Mabel Kendrick, as she entered her brother-in-law's private office in the city, "are you alone?"

"Yes; take this seat, Sister." He placed a chair for her.

"Why didn't you come over to-day, when I sent for you?" Mabel began at once on the subject of her call.

"To tell you the truth, Mabel, I have exhausted my resources, and can't do any more for you," he stated positively.

"You can if you will," she insisted.

"Besides I will do nothing more without Richard's consent," he argued.

"And you know perfectly well that Richard would never give his consent." She hid her face in her arms on the table and sobbed convulsively.

The Doctor watched her with a demoniacal grin on his dark countenance. His evil nature was in control to-day, in fiendish enjoyment of his fair sister-in-law's humiliation.

"Tell Richard all about it," he advised. "Such distress as you are experiencing would win his heart to the sacrifice of any principle."

"No; I will not tell him. He looks so worried now. He feels in his soul that something is wrong, and he is so patient and good. No; I shall never tell him anything. If I could get over this and be bright and happy once more, he would forget these four months of gloom. He sees through my artificial smiles, and knows I am hiding something, and it makes him so unhappy. I use to think you were a fine physician and could do better than any one. I don't think so any more," she sobbed.

"You should credit me with trying, at least," he whispered.

"Sometimes I feel that you haven't really tried. I know you can be kind, and I believe, too, that you can be mean and wicked," she cried, looking up at him with something of doubt and dread in her countenance.

"How about your pet theory of happiness?" he began. "If felicity is a state of sanity, wretchedness must be a condition of insanity. Do you think it wise to apply to a madman to change the laws of nature? Could you expect that a demon in hell would aid a mortal to the bliss of heaven? Can a man covet an adorable being and enjoy seeing it possessed by the object of his hate?"

Hot anger dried her tears. Looking at her brother-in-law with dilating pupils, she rose and hastily left the room. As the outer door closed, the Doctor jeered:

"Come back, Mabel, and I'll give you some more bread pills," and laughed a long, low gurgle of satanic mirth. "Happy! Yes; happy as I am! Both of them happy! All of us in the seventh heaven of happiness!" Again he indulged in a joyless laugh.

CHAPTER VII.

MATERNITY.

An essence of cleanliness permeated the Kendrick home. The window-draperies hung in faultless purity before the newly polished glass. Microscopic inspection could scarcely find a bacterium in the refreshed rugs. The aired and dusted books belied the poet's insinuation, "through the leaves ye magots make your windings, but for the owner's sake, oh, spare the binding." The fragrance of the last blooming Marechal Niel rose scented the atmosphere. The lingering kiss of the setting sun suffused the portraits on the wall with a golden glow, and friends, pleading for speech, looked down on the master of the house, who sat by his study-table absorbed in perplexing thought. He held an open book, indifferent to its contents. Within a few feet of him, reclining on the cushions of his library window, was the beautiful woman, the better half of his own being, one who was the all-controlling passion of his life; and, yet, some queer, indefinable skeleton had been intruding between them for the past season. To an uninterested observer, his wife appeared unchanged; to him, she was intrinsically different. She sang, played, chatted and laughed as usual; but an almost imperceptible dissonance accompanied her voice. Her natural, frank sincerity had lost its artlessness. If the thing were more tangible, he might form some conclusion. Deeply engrossed in meditation, he was startled by the call:

"Richard, come here, please."

His heart gave a bound, his fingers tightened over his book, though he did not move. Some element in the quality of the voice thrilled him with a pleasure he had not known for months; it was the old true ring. The nightmare had fallen from their lives and his beloved was herself again.

"Come, Richard," Mabel repeated.

He wavered with a fear that he might break the spell and again find reserve and uncertainty.

"Richard, are you asleep? I've just had the most curious experience."

Dressed in a soft, cool wrapper, she was reclining among the cushions of the window-seat, where she enjoyed an afternoon siesta, though it was only recently that she had forsaken her boudoir to ensconce herself behind the curtains near her husband. He parted the drapery and pulled up a chair, watching the peculiar expression that played over her face: the brilliance of her liquid eyes, the hectic flush on her cheeks, and the extreme pallor around her smiling lips. Her luxuriant hair was thrown loosely over the pillow, and her hands clasped lightly across her breast.

"Are you ill, dear?" he asked gently.

A lump in her throat choked her voice, and she looked at her husband with a radiant, tearful smile.

"Can't I do something for you?"

She shook her head.

"There's Dick in the yard. I'll tell him to send his father in," said Richard, solicitously.

Disgust, sorrow, and anger mingled in the expression of her countenance as she covered her face with her hands and said, "No, no."

Perplexed and annoyed, Richard waited, absently smoothing the hair from her temple. She caught his hand and kissed it impulsively, then pressed it to her heart.

"Are you sick, darling? What is the matter with you?"

"I'm intensely alive and well," said Mabel, blushing. "Can't you guess, dear?"

Her mood, her expression, thrilled him with an emotion that responded to her call. "Dearest, dare I hope?" he replied hesitatingly.

"O Richard, don't you know? You must know. Her wide open eyes held him appealingly.

"Mabel, darling, can it be true, and you are happy?" He caught her in his arms in an ecstasy of delight. His joy was so great that it was several minutes before he discovered that she was weeping. "Dearest, what, crying! I thought you were glad."

"I am now; but I have been so wicked. I was rebellious and ugly. Now, I'm so awfully sorry that I walked and walked—and tried to—tried to—prevent the full fruition of the consummation of our love," she sobbed.

"Never mind, dear. You could not help the way you felt. You were not yourself, and kept your trouble from the only one who could have comforted you. But it's all right now—'Just you and me' again." He arranged her hair over his shoulder and held her as a child.

"'Just you and me?' " she questioned through her tears.

He kissed her affectionately; and, leaning on his shoulder, she told him of all her joys and griefs, not yet able to understand how, under the Divine economy, that quickening engenders love. He soothed, counselled, and cheered her, until she was able to dress for dinner and appear before the servants as beautiful and bright as ever.

In the early part of October, Dr. Harding came from his room with a grip in his hand and said to

his wife: "I shall be absent all day, and, perhaps, again to-morrow. I should have gone yesterday, but waited to see how Dick's throat would be this morning. If you don't let him get any more cold, he can start to school Monday. If you need a physician while I'm gone, send for Dr. Raymond."

"I don't think we'll need him. I am well, and Dick's better, and Mabel is so good to us. She's constantly bringing me some little delicacy, and seems so perfectly happy herself," said Luella.

"It's all sham. She's a consummate actor. Do you suppose a woman who loves pomp and show and is vain of her beauty and ability, will willingly give up the honors she has anticipated this winter? No. You don't know her as I do." His steel-cut malignant voice made his wife cringe.

"She has persuaded Mrs. Elliot to accept her place on the committee," averred Luella.

"Mrs. Elliot! She's a good one," ironically sneered the Doctor.

"Mrs. Elliot is recognized as the most capable woman the church has known since the time that Mrs. Falconer lived here," meekly replied Mrs. Harding.

"Why couldn't Mabel put you in her place? To have stood with your brother, would have been most appropriate. Or won't the Mayor preside without his wife?"

"Richard tried to get off; but the City Council wouldn't listen to it——" she hesitated.

"Well, finish," urged the Doctor.

"Mabel did come to me," added Luella.

"And you refused to fill her place?"

"Of course I did. I'm not handsome enough for such a prominent position, and probably will not be strong; besides, Mabel says, 'A mother's first duty is to take care of herself, for the sake of her children.'" She watched her husband timidly. His

dark countenance took on an expression of incredulity, and, shrugging his shoulders, left the house.

He did not leave the city, though there appeared on his office door a placard saying: "Out of town." Instead, he was in his private office, engaged in experiments that had been interdicted by the Society for Cruelty to Animals. Disappointed in love and social aggrandizement, Dr. Harding had become infatuated with the power and perplexities of his profession. The city hospitals had been invaded and questionable work inhibited; so the Doctor retired to his own secret region, where, if necessary, a post-mortem examination could be satisfactorily accomplished, without fear of discovery. Here he pursued his physiological investigations and practised vivisection on rats, cats, birds, and monkeys, and held autopsies over higher species.

His assistant was a man of questionable habits. By profession, he was sexton of the Catholic cemetery that occupied a beautiful site just outside the city limits, at the base of a hill on which a portion of the town had been built, which was destroyed during the Civil War by conflagration. His father had been a respected grave-digger, whose wife had Gypsy blood in her veins, of Spanish and Hungarian origin. She was a Catholic and still a pretty woman when she was left a widow with one child, this son, who continued his father's work. It was in devotion to his mother that he resorted to ways of which she was ignorant to secure for her more of the comforts of life and a few of the luxuries. Dressed as a reputed citizen, he frequented the aviary and purchased birds. Animals that he could not buy, he purloined, and trapped the squirrels in forbidden parks. Then, disguised as a beggar, he meandered through the dark, uninhabited alleys, apparently picking up rags, old tin, and waste iron, and, with the large basket he carried, suddenly disappearing

through on obscure door in the back of Dr. Harding's building.

The young sexton realized too late that he was putting himself more and more in the power of a hard taskmaster; but he did not regret it while his mother enjoyed the perquisites of his sacrifice, though he lived in dread of discovery; for the unscrupulous Doctor sought him in his home if he failed to appear at his office at the hour designated.

The winter advanced. Mrs. Kendrick and Mrs. Harding declined invitations to dinners and parties, but frequented the opera and club lectures. They sought the art galleries and visited the greenhouses and studied the esthetic in every opportunity. Mabel, always an enthusiast, had become a hearty convert to the doctrine of prenatal influence, and believed the coming generation would be beautiful and good if the present generation so willed it. For several months the sisters-in-law were almost inseparable, and, with each new day, Mabel grew more charmingly happy.

When Dick and Tommy came home from school one evening and found they had a little sister, they were wild with delight. In fact, the two families became so wholly occupied with their domestic felicity that they lost their interest in the events of the city, which had been so all absorbing during the summer. The boys were generally late to school; for they would hang around the baby, some times keeping still for fully a minute to watch her open her big, black eyes. They declared she knew "tother from which" before she was seven weeks old. They were very earnest in expressing their gratitude to the nurse; for they credited her with the gift of their sister.

Miss Lewis, the new nurse, was a girl not more than sixteen years old, with a timid, tractable disposition. She had recently received her certificate of

competency from the hospital and was anxious to make a success in the calling she had chosen. So far her experience had been so limited that she trusted every one, and implicit obedience to the instructions of the physician had formed a part of her education.

The advent of his daughter might have had a stronger influence in softening the nature of Dr. Harding had she come at any other time. Chagrin and disappointment, in his vengeful desire to see Richard Kendrick's wife humiliated and miserable, seemed keener because he had not done anything materially wrong himself. He had not been greatly surprised at the turn things had taken; for experience had shown him that maternal love often saved a soul from a watery grave, and, unquestionably, nature's laws would work more powerfully in surroundings of peace and purity; but, in this instance, he had reckoned on an exception. He had been confident that love of *éclat* and admiration would overbalance other considerations. Now, he interpreted his false calculations as a personal grievance. So it is that the wicked heart becomes more evil with its own imaginings, until the most heinous evil becomes a pleasure. In a desire to contribute to the happiness of others, by reflex influence the heart is made purer and holier; so, too, in the wish to accomplish harm and injury, there is turned back on the soul a putrefying agency that corrodes and destroys the good emotions, converting them into satanic impulses. Dr. Harding had nothing clear in his mind as to what he intended doing. There was a dark providence in which he trusted, and he resolved, by all the devils in hell, that he would not be tantalized by seeing the proud Mayor's child a pleasure to the haughty beauty who had laughed in his face in joyous satisfaction, at an evil that had been overruled for good.

The first heavy snow of winter had buried all the dank leaves and dead flowers. The blackened earth was brilliant in her dress of white. The merry sleigh-bells were ringing, and the gay people of the prosperous city were gathering in the gorgeously lighted building erected for the great Bernadotte Ball. The renowned foreigner, in a private car, had reached the city, had been met by a special committee, and conducted to a suite of rooms in the Grand Hotel, where he and his retinue could rest an hour and prepare for the function given in their honor.

Richard Kendrick had been assured by the doctor that accouchement was not expected for a week, and, as a matter of extreme precaution, he had insisted on having Miss Lewis recalled from the hospital, where she had gone, after staying six weeks with Mrs. Harding. As Mayor of the City, it was of paramount importance that he should preside at the reception of their distinguished visitor. Assisted by Judge Johnson, the Rev. Mr. Elliot, Mrs. Elliot and others, they extended the American welcome to the Right Honorable Knight of the North Star of Sweden, Bernadotte, and his staff, and, for hours, introduced the brilliant throng. The strain was so intense that Richard Kendrick lost the power to remember correctly the familiar names with which he associated daily. There were moments when his heart seemed ready to burst; a mighty drawing was urging him to sacrifice every temporal interest and speed away to his home and his wife. Again and again, he tried to reassure himself by confidence in his brother-in-law and his own loyalty to duty. In the great banquet hall, where others were feasting, the viands stuck in his parched throat. At last, about five o'clock, when the dance was again in full swing, and Bernadotte, from some indisposition, begged to retire, Judge Johnson and Richard

Kendrick, leaving others in charge, slipped away from the crowd.

They drove rapidly into the city, and sped up the avenue. Seeing lights in the bed-chamber, the Judge asked timidly: "May I stop with you and learn if all is well?"

"Certainly, Judge; come in. I have been in an agony of suspense all evening. But Dr. Harding assured me that there was no need of worrying."

He hurried into the house, turned on the gas in the parlor and rushed upstairs. The Doctor met him in the upper hall.

"How is Mabel?" he cried.

The Judge caught a glimpse of the Doctor's face from where he stood in the parlor door, and, from its strange pallor, concluded that Mrs. Kendrick was dead. Unbidden, he mounted the stairs, three steps at a jump, and was reassured when he heard the reply: "Mabel is doing well."

"And the child?" Richard gasped. A nervous presentiment choked his utterance.

"Born at 11:10. Mabel was very much exhausted and fell asleep soon afterward," stated the Doctor. His peculiar intonation sent a chill through his listeners.

They slipped softly into a little room joining Mabel's suite, which had been furnished for the nurse.

"How is this?" asked the nervous husband, staring at an old woman, who sat beside a bed on which a little bundle wrapped in lace and flannel lay. "You're not Miss Lewis. Where is the nurse I left here?"

The new nurse, a hard old woman, with envy written in every line of her wrinkled face, mumbled: "The Lewis girl went to sleep and rolled over on the babe and smothered it. She was sent about her business, and ought to be dismissed from the hospital."

"Smothered the child! My God!" gasped Richard.

"Quiet, boy, be quiet. Remember your poor wife," said Judge Johnson.

"A boy," croaked the old nurse. "She don't know it yet."

The father stood by the bed, staring at the bundle of lovely clothes and the wee head that was to have been the crowning joy of their wedded life, a father's pride and ambition, a mother's comfort and joy. Great sobs welled up in his breast, which he suppressed for her sake. The deepest, keenest, most excruciating pain was in the knowledge of her terrible sorrow. Would she be able to bear it! He turned to go into her room when the Doctor said:

"Do not disturb her. Let her sleep till daylight, and she will be stronger. Keep it from her as long as possible."

"He's dead," fretted the old nurse. "You don't need to examine it."

Judge Johnson was lifting the little head tenderly and turning the face to the light, so he could see it distinctly.

Dr. Harding grew nervous, and spoke in a hard, dry tone: "I had not intended calling attention, especially, to the child. However, you may as well know. Perhaps you will be more readily reconciled to your loss, Richard. I fear the boy would never have been quite right and would have been a greater grief to you grown up than to have lost him in infancy."

Richard did not reply, but sought a seat near his wife's bed, and hid his face on her soft, white hand. The Judge went to his hotel. Dr. Harding, too, went home, woke his wife, acquainted her with the circumstances, and advised her to go over and remain with Mabel until she could make known her disappointment. Luella hurried to her brother's

side. The agony of his strong face pierced her heart. She put her arms around him and held his head against her breast, and he wept like a child. Mabel was in a deep sleep and did not awaken until the sun was high on this cold winter morning.

Smiling, refreshed, and bright, she said: Richard, dear, is our little darling all right? How he did yell last night. The Doctor said I was too weak to see him. I must have been asleep. Bring him to me now. What is the matter with you two? Is anything wrong? Can't I see the baby?"

The old nurse appeared at the door.

"Who is that?" asked Mabel. "Where's Miss Lewis?"

"She had to leave, and Thomas got a nurse who is stronger and more experienced, dear," said Luella.

"I'm sorry he made the change. He said last night that Miss Lewis was sick and made her take a powder. Richard, what are you staring out of the window for? Come here and ask the nurse to bring the child. Is he asleep?" she pleaded.

"He's asleep, dear," said Luella. "Here's the maid with your breakfast. Let me hold the tray. You may go," to the maid. "Your sleep has refreshed you, and, when you have eaten, you will be stronger."

"I'm not very hungry, and I don't think I needed anything to make me sleep; but the Doctor thought I did. Come, Richard, butter my toast for me, please. Have you had your breakfast? No! Of course, you ate at the banquet. Was it a grand affair? Was Mrs. Elliot a success? Did they miss me? Why don't you tell me all about everything? I can't eat and talk too. There, now; send the tray away and bring me my baby, please."

She looked so eagerly happy that Richard rushed out of the room, and then she knew that sorrow of some kind was in store for her. She could not de-

fine the nature of it; but, as in all great crises in life, when an intuition of evil awakens the latent strength, she prepared herself for the inevitable.

When her husband and sister returned to her room, she asked: "What has happened? Luella, tell me, please."

"The child lived only an hour, dear," said Luella, softly.

"Dead, *dead!* Do you mean that that strong new voice is hushed so soon? I can not believe it," she cried. "Bring me my boy!"

"Darling, she is telling you the truth," sobbed Richard, not able to control himself even for his wife's sake.

"Thomas said it would be better for you not to see him," pleaded Luella.

"He said so last night. I'm sorry I listened to him then." She looked at Luella with glassy eyes; then, to her husband, she spoke softly: "Don't cry, dearest; I am only grieved for you and your disappointment. For me, it is but just. God has punished me for my sin, though I have been so deeply sorry. Bring the boy. I must see him."

Richard brought the child and laid him in her arms. She did not look at him closely, nor did she shed a tear. She pressed her lips to the little forehead, then said to Luella:

"Sister, you are a dear, good woman, and I love you and your children, which makes it very painful for me to ask you to carry this message to Dr. Harding. Tell him that I request him never to come near nor to speak to me again."

"Don't, dear," interceded her husband. "The Doctor was not to blame. I'm sure he feels deeply distressed; I never saw him more concerned or exercised."

"Will you, Luella?" asked Mabel.

"Certainly, dear. With trouble so great as yours,

we can not hold you responsible for what you do now," said Luella, sadly.

"I thank you, Sister. And, Richard, if you think I need a physician's care, call Dr. Thomson, please, mamma's old doctor," she asked.

The Masonic cemetery was a little beyond the Catholic grounds, and here a carriage, containing the Rev. Mr. Elliot and his wife, Richard Kendrick and his sister, with a little white casket on their laps, quietly entered, and the highest hopes and truest ambitions of a noble father were buried with the body of a child.

Mabel Kendrick lingered convalescent for nearly three months. After the weather grew warmer and she was permitted to go out driving, she still remained in a state of apathy, taking no interest in anything. The Harding boys were very unhappy over their Aunt Mabel's estrangement, and often begged to carry their little sister over to see her; but they were restrained from day to day by the injunction that she was not well yet, nor the baby large enough to go visiting.

Eleanor Harding was a black-eyed beauty, quick, smart, and mischievous. She began to rule the household when she was a year old. The boys petted and teased her in turn. They said she always could talk, and she walked at fourteen months. Finally, the boys became so enthusiastic over her, they disobeyed, and slipped over to tell Aunt Mabel the wonderful words Eleanor could say and the cute tricks she could do. After reporting that they were cordially received, they were allowed to go over occasionally. However, Mabel manifested little interest in her niece, until, one day, as she reclined on a couch in the music-room, she looked across the lawn and saw that Eleanor had taken her father's purse from his hand and had thrown it away; and he was trying to make her bring it back to him.

"She's a little vixen, isn't she?" said Richard, following his wife's gaze and rejoicing to see a smile on her face.

"He will never break her will," assented Mabel.

They watched the contest from behind the window-curtains. The Doctor seemed to coax, command, and to threaten. He carried her to the purse, held her hand on it, and stepped back, and held out his own to receive it. Eleanor looked up at him a moment, then, laughing defiantly, ran from him. She cried terrifically when he caught her. He offered her his watch, and she struck it away. At last, he lost his temper completely and raised his hand to strike the child.

Somebody else was watching, too; and, with feigned innocence, Luella caught up the babe, saying: "Come, girly, time for your lunch," and disappeared as quickly as she had come on the scene.

When Eleanor was three years old, she decided she must go into Aunt Mabel's whenever she heard the piano. She would go shyly in, climb in a chair, smooth down her dress and demurely cross her hands, and sit and listen as long as her aunt continued to play. Then, she would walk out without a word. When her brothers questioned her about where she had been, she made a mouth at them. If they followed her, she did not stay, but went home and waited until they came out; then, she would go back and climb in her chair, fix her dress, fold her hands, and listen.

Her father was very proud of her beauty and excused her wilfulness by saying: "She is just like her daddy."

He had her picture taken often, and the one he most admired was made when she was five years old. She was in one of her stubborn moods and could not be coaxed, hired, or whipped into posing as her parents wished. At last, the photographer

suggested to let her take her own attitude. She climbed into the seat, one foot hanging down in front, the other thrown over a high arm of the chair, her right hand holding the knob on the top; and, with her head thrown back, curls afloat, eyes dancing and lips laughing, she made a picture that would be a delight to any artist.

CHAPTER VIII.

FORGIVENESS.

"Richard, there comes Mrs. Elliot and Mrs. Jennings, which means an hour of excruciating annoyance to me," nervously exclaimed Mrs. Kendrick.

"It grieves me beyond measure, Mabel, darling," replied her husband, "that you can not throw off this lethargy and enjoy life as you used to. Those ladies are coming to call in pure kindness."

"O dear, I know they are, and they are both excellent women. But where can there be found anything more trying to the patience of one who has brains above the level of her serving-maid than a woman like Mrs. Jennings?" fretted Mabel.

"She is a good woman, whose husband is a worthy elder in our church," asseverated Mayor Kendrick.

"I know she is; but you have never been forced to listen to her talk. She will consume a full hour, tediously recounting all her domestic incidentals. It is not the only subject under consideration—the seamstress, the house-maid, the kitchen, and personal ailments—but each item of every theme is lengthened into infinity. It is a mystery how one can use so many words about so little. Come to a period? She doesn't know how. If she should stop, it's like the striking of a clock, with no change of inflection. You can't change the subject; for she is so highly entertained with her own ability to keep talking that she won't see that you are bored," continued Mabel.

"Can't you let Mrs. Elliot do the talking?" asked Richard.

"Well, Mrs. Elliot can manage Mrs. Jennings better than I can; for she will begin talking at the same time; and I'm sure that is less discourteous than to monopolize with uninteresting gossip. But Mrs. Elliot has a hobby. Though six years have passed since the Bernadotte Ball, she has to make some reference to the part she played in every conversation of any length," sighed Mabel. "I seem doomed never to be allowed to forget that time."

"Don't you make a mistake in trying to forget it?" asked Richard, kindly. "Wouldn't it be more unselfish in you to help others to recall the grandeur and pleasure of it? In an effort to make others happy, you would forget your own unhappiness. You know that I am just as proud of you, and as ambitious for you, as I was before that time. Isn't your love for me strong enough to bring back your natural gaiety and make our home a place of enjoyment?" He held her in his arms and kissed her tenderly, and left her to greet the callers in the drawing-room.

The visit proved less trying than Mabel had anticipated. Mrs. Elliot was planning for a special Easter service and had called to urge Mabel to come and once more fill her place in the choir. They laid all their plans before her and discussed the program minutely. A new pipe-organ was to be used this Easter day, and many requests had been sent to have Mrs. Kendrick sing. If she felt that she could not sing, then, would she not write a poem for them? When the women left, she had half-heartedly promised to try to help a little.

Walking down the avenue, Mrs. Jennings commented: "I just couldn't help but feel sorry for Mrs. Kendrick, she was so absent-minded and despondent. Why, when I told her how bad my niece felt, when her chambermaid let that groceryman's

little boy run in front of the baby-cab, and bounce the child out into the gutter, and get his lace skirt so black from the coal soot that it took her wash-woman's sister three trials at it before it ever looked white again, I don't think she heard a word that I said."

"She is a changed woman," said Mrs. Elliot. "She has never recovered from the shock caused by the death of her baby. Instead of taking a pride and pleasure in the Mayor's prominence and success, she is grieved because he has no son to share his honors. Then, I'm sure it was a great disappointment to her to miss the Bernadotte Ball. You will notice that I never refer to it in her presence. You remember I filled her place on the committee."

"That's true. I believe you didn't speak of it to-day," naively assented Mrs. Jennings. "I never will forget the amount of provision that those servants carried off after that banquet. One girl had her cousin and two chums there, and they had each a basket or two, and into them they put turkey, ham, chicken, celery, pie, cranberries, pickles, rolls, scores of rolls, and cake—you couldn't count the different kinds of cake that they picked up—and cookies and doughnuts. I know as many as a dozen crullers and salad, all kinds of salad; they couldn't eat it in a week—and tongue. Yes; I saw a girl put a whole tongue in one basket; they could have run a boarding house for a month. And then, sugar and even bottles of cream. Well, there really was no use in letting it go to waste; and tarts and candies; they just filled up all the cracks with nuts and confections: but I don't think any silver was lost or china broken. Of course, they had been told to carry away the provision after the banquet was over. My niece, who was sick at the time, had charged me to take particular note of the elegant dresses, so that I could describe them to her; but my! that was a thing im-

possible; for, really, sometimes, when I looked over that ball-room, it seemed the absence of dresses, except the great yards of goods that laid on the floor and kept the dust off the men's shoes. But it was a grand occasion; the city will not have anything so fine very soon again. Now, if Mrs. Kendrick had been there, you would have missed a great honor. I remember that I was surprised when I heard that she had resigned in your favor. I was at the dress-maker's and I said to her that I knew you would do the part well, but no one could be so handsome as Mrs. Kendrick. Yes; those girls actually took a jar of ice-cream away with them, and a whole lot of lemonade. Now, you know lemonade——"

They had reached the corner where their paths separated, and Mrs. Elliot cut her friend short by a "Good-bye; you'll be at the church to help to-morrow."

Mabel Kendrick went up to her lonely room, the beautiful boudoir, which had been a place of pure delight to her for eight years, until one night of calamity had changed the face of all the world. The room had now become a seclusion for grief. Here, in her heart, she would recall her sin and her punishment; and, here, she hoped penitence had secured divine forgiveness. She felt that her life was a reproach to her husband; and she was haunted by the verse: "Her children rise up and call her blessed, her husband also and he praiseth her." This happened to be her birthday verse in the thirty-first chapter of Proverbs. It was now a mockery to her. The nephews, almost young men, bright, promising boys, were ever a source of pain to her, because her husband had no son to follow in his worthy footsteps. The things she had once taken exquisite delight in, were now void of interest. The picture of Hoffman's "Christ" no longer appealed to her; the countenance had changed from a benevolent expression

to that of disapprobation. The music of Wagner's "Lohengrin" was as discordant as the Japanese kota and samisen, tuned a fifth apart and playing the same air. Where once she enjoyed the bloom and beauty of the rose, she saw only blemished petals and disfigured leaves. She no longer sat on the porch in a dreamy mood, listening to the song of the birds, but fretted over the noise of the tree-frogs and the chattering of katydids. The admiring look and complimentary speech of friends, which were wont to bring the blush to her cheek and the sparkle to her eye, had become a source of extreme disgust to her. She banished lighter literature and forced herself to read the political and city news, that she might be able to converse intelligently with her husband, along lines that were of interest to him. She desired, if it were possible, to make herself in some measure a compensation to him.

"Did you agree to help in the Easter service?" Richard asked his wife in the evening.

"I kind o' promised to write an Easter poem," said Mabel.

"Mr. Elliot was talking to me about it as I came home. They are all hoping that you will sing," said Richard.

"You know, dear, that I feel very deeply about some things. And one is, a person who cherishes an unforgiving spirit in her heart has no right to take an important part in a sacred service," averred Mabel.

"To what do you refer, dear?" asked Richard, uncertainly.

"For six years, Richard, I have not spoken to you of Dr. Harding, because he is your sister's husband. You must pardon me this once for saying that I believe he is responsible for the death of my babe, and I cannot forgive him," she spoke slowly and sadly,

"though his cruel design may have had its incipency in my own evil desire."

"I suspected where you placed the responsibility of our loss, and I have been waiting a long time for you to open your heart to me. Come here, little girl, and let us reason together." He took her in his arms. "You know that you are dearer to me than all the world, don't you?" She assented and he continued: "Don't you know that there would be no joy in heaven for me if I got there and you did not?"

Mabel smiled sadly, not comprehending the purport of his words.

"Our little boy has been admitted," he continued. "We are sure the Gate of Pearl opened and let the little fellow in. But we can't pass so easily, not unless our sins are forgiven; can we?"

"I know St. Peter will welcome you, and, surely, I have been punished sufficiently to be permitted to follow you," she pleaded.

"Our sorrows and afflictions here are not passports to heaven. They purify us, 'as by fire,' and refine us into more beautiful characters," insisted Richard. "But faith in the atonement and obedience to the Father are necessary for you and me to secure a room in the everlasting mansion, where our little one is waiting for us."

"Well, then, isn't it all right for us?"

"If ye forgive not men their trespasses neither will your heavenly Father forgive you.' Don't you see, dear, that, while you are trying to make me happy through our few short years on earth, you are harboring a little thing in your heart that may make me sad throughout eternity?" said Richard, tenderly.

"And do you really think, Richard, that I cannot be admitted into heaven without forgiving Dr. Harding?"

"Can we enter heaven unforgiven? Are we not plainly told that 'as we forgive we shall be forgiven?' The merits or demerits of the person forgiven are not to be considered."

"Those are hard conditions," said Mabel.

"Not at all. 'Vengeance is mine. I will recompense, saith the Lord.' He claims the right to punish; and 'it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Lord.' Furthermore, it is a great blessing to be able to forgive. You would be happier, my dear, if you could put this ugly feeling out of your heart; then, you would soon be your old self again."

"But I do not wish to be as I once was," she replied.

"Not for my sake? This is a grand old world; marvellous in its power, wonderful in its grandeur, gorgeous in its beauty; and all that I need for a full enjoyment of it is you by my side, brilliant, beautiful, and—good." He pressed her to his breast.

"You hesitate over the good?"

"Near-good now, wholly good when Thomas is forgiven. It is not for him that I care, only for you, dear. I often feel that he is a bad man; but I must not judge."

"He is going to have trials and tribulations in bringing up his little girl, I am sure," laughed Mabel. "Do you know the little mischief got angry with her father last night and ran away, and they hunted for her all night? They questioned my girls; but they had not seen her. Luella called the police force out and was nearly frantic."

"Yes; I learned about it at the city hall. Hadn't they found her when I came home?" asked Richard.

"No; because she was over here all the time. She slipped in through the cellar window, where that broken bar is above the coal-pit, came round and got up-stairs without being seen, and went to bed in

the guest-chamber. I wish you had seen the coal dust on the sheets. I didn't know she was here until after breakfast. You had just gone, when she came down and coolly asked me to fasten her clothes. She ate her breakfast very deliberately, and said: 'Papa said I shouldn't have any breakfast, and I *will not* live with him. I'm going to live with my Aunt Mabel.' And I said: 'But, Eleanor, you don't want to leave Mamma?' She studied over the matter and replied: 'I like Dick and Tom; but whatever made Mamma raise such a husband?' The maid slipped over after Luella, and she came in while the child was eating." Mabel laughed cheerfully, adding: "She'll give her father a few heartaches."

"I don't want to be hard on you, dear; but remember that old verse of Scripture: 'Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth: Lest the Lord see it, and it displease Him, and He turn away His wrath from him,' " quoted Richard.

"Now I see why you wouldn't let me rejoice last year, when your opponent was discovered buying up votes," laughed Mabel.

"Yes; I was really afraid that my pleasure in his downfall would lose me the victory. Well, I must go to the office. This talk has done us both good. I see it in your face and feel it in the aura that surrounds you. I shall expect to read your Easter poem when I come home."

It was several days later that Mabel gave her verses to her husband to read and criticise.

EASTER MORN.

On Judah's hills, a dark'ning pall
Was settling fast with thick'ning gloom.
The Lion of the tribe was dead,
The Man of Nazareth in his tomb.

His chosen foll'wers murmur and complain
"We thought 'twas He who Israel should reclaim."

Deep malice was triumphant now,
And hope seemed dead and heaven afar;
For gloomy darkness still prevailed
Where once the light of Bethlehem's Star,
Light'ning the weary pilgrim on his way,
Beamed with the promise of eternal day.

Dispersed abroad, the chosen few
Whisper'd of doubt and hope and fear—
Waited, wondering what to do.
The seal'd and guarded tomb, so drear,
Held the slain body of their loving Lord.
What joy could that last Sabbath day afford?

One woman,—who could not forget,
Nor let love's labor end in death,
Whose earnest heart was glowing yet;
And would be with its final breath,—
Came with the dawn in haste to find His tomb,
And with sweet spices mitigate its gloom.

What joy! the stone is rolled away;
An angel form now guards the pris'n.
Behold the dark place where he lay—
"He is not here! Your Lord is ris'n.
Go tell his sad disciples what you see,
He goes before you into Galilee."

Now, o'er the earth, this message tell
On Eastern morn. Salvation's story!
The Lord has conquered death and hell,
And reigns for aye in realms of glory.
His cruel death and resurrection prove
The power of His all-saving, precious love.

Now to the risen Lord, we bring
The trophies of our loving praise.
With trembling joy, we read His word;
In prayer and song our voices raise.
In faith and penitence and love, we sing—
These are the Easter offerings that we bring.

We bring to Thee our grief and joy,
And all our waywardness and sin:
And while Thy praise our tongues employ,
Pray Thee, to make us pure within.
Those who have wrong'd us, freely we forgive,
That in Thy love we may forever live.

O may this Easter morn of joy
Its lesson in our hearts impress.
The resurrection theme employ
Our future life and heavenly dress.
May we Thy gracious peace, O Saviour, prize,
And meet Thee, when thou cometh in the skies.

When Richard Kendrick sat down in his library chair, his wife ensconced herself on the window-seat to watch him read her verses. He perused the sad story of the tomb, and the bright verses of the glorious resurrection; and his heart was filled with joy in the lines that pledged a new consecration to duty, a forgiveness of all wrongs, and a hope of eternal blessedness.

When he folded the paper, she smilingly said: "It is all right now."

"Yes, indeed," he replied; "and we shall have a truer and a sweeter life than we have ever had before. And poor, dear Luella, she will have a little more joy than she has had for some time."

"Talk of an angel and her wings will flutter," laughed Mabel, seeing her sister-in-law in the yard.

"Come in, Luella," called Richard. "I have not seen you for a week."

"Because you have not been over," said Luella, coming up to the veranda and looking through the open window. "Thomas objects to my being here," and she looked anxiously down the avenue.

"Suppose we tread on his objections, and visit as we please, allowing him the same privilege; what do you say, Sister?" asked Richard.

There was a new quality in her brother's voice, and Luella divined some pleasant change in their relationship. She looked at Mabel questioningly.

"Richard wants me to go with him to dine with the Elliots to-night." She winked at her husband.

"But—the Elliots are to be with me, to-night. You don't mean——" began Luella.

"Well," grunted Richard.

"Will you come to my house?" she asked in deep concern.

"Shall we go, Mabel?" tenderly questioned Richard.

"Just as you say, Richard, and Luella doesn't object," Mabel replied.

"It would be a very great pleasure to the children and to me to have you come. I don't know how Thomas will feel," said Luella, sincerely.

"If it would make conditions more unpleasant for you, Sister, we shall not come. But we are willing to experiment, if you are. Mabel made the first breach; it is but just for her to try to heal it."

"I want you to come," Luella said deliberately. "We are to spend our lives in the same yard, and amicable relations are to be desired if it is possible to attain them. We'll try."

Later, when the projected visit was made known to Dr. Harding, he stormed and left the house without eating his lunch. A man can deceive almost any

one easier than he can dupe his wife, and Luella covertly smiled at her husband's affectation of anger. However, she was surprised and relieved, when a messenger brought word in the afternoon that the Doctor had received a call to the country and requested Mr. Elliot to excuse his absence.

It was a delightful dinner-hour. The children were frantic with joy; and Mrs. Elliot was enthusiastically in love with every one; for Mabel was encouraging her to talk about the Bernadotte Ball. Partially aware of the coolness that had existed between the families, the minister was gratified to find himself in an atmosphere of hearty congeniality, and listened with pride to his wife as she described the gown she had worn and repeated the comments that were made by the Right Honorable Knight of the North Star of Sweden, dwelling merrily on the manners of the foreigners and giving minutia of court dress. The Mayor's heart thrilled with pleasure at this evidence of his wife's complete revivification.

One afternoon in the early fall, Mabel Kendrick was walking up the avenue when she heard her niece screaming and begging for protection.

"O, Aunt Mabel, save me! Save me! Papa says he'll kill me."

Dr. Harding, with a switch in his hand, was following closely. Mabel hastened her steps, caught the child in her arms, and entered her own gate.

"Put that girl down!" commanded the father, speaking to his sister-in-law for the first time since his enforced silence.

Mabel did not pause, but whispered to the child, "What have you done, Eleanor, to make your father so angry?"

"He told me not to go into his desk, and I did. I found a picture of papa and you, and cut papa's

face off, 'cause I just wanted you. He caught me and shook me hard, and I turned the ink over all his papers."

When the angry man saw that his sister-in-law was taking his child home with her, he sprang forward, saying: "How dare you? Let go that girl!"

Eleanor clung to her, crying: "Don't give me up. Please don't, Aunt Mabel. He'll kill me." She hid her face on her aunt's shoulder, trembling violently.

"You are too angry to punish her now, Dr. Harding, and she is so frightened she would not be benefited," Mabel spoke calmly.

As the Doctor took hold of the child, she squalled so loud he could not hear his own voice. When he let go of her, she sobbed, and tightened her arms around her aunt's neck.

"Come, sit down, Doctor, and let us reason together, until you are both more calm," Mabel suggested.

He ignored her invitation, angry that she was enjoying the situation—great, strong man powerless beside a pretty, wilful child. Every time he opened his lips or moved toward her, her crying began, and ceased only when Mrs. Kendrick spoke. She was curious to hear what her aunt would do, determined to hear nothing from her father. The critical scene was closed by an unexpected interruption.

Dick came running with the news: "Papa! Edgar Mill's horse ran away, threw him out and knocked his head against a lamp-post. They want you quick. He's unconscious."

"Where is he?" asked the Doctor.

"They carried him up to Judge Johnson's room. It was right in front of the hotel. They don't want his mother to know till you come and see if he's alive," stated the boy, excitedly.

Eleanor listened interestedly; but, when Dr.

Harding turned for a parting look of disapprobation, she grabbed Mabel around the shoulders, and set up her powerful screams till her father had disappeared. Then, she threw back her curls and looked into her aunt's face with a triumphant smile.

"What must we do with you, Eleanor?" asked Mabel, assuming an expression of grave seriousness.

"I don't know," naively replied the child.

Mrs. Harding had been watching from her parlor window, and, when her husband left, she came in and persuaded Eleanor to come home.

"Aren't you afraid that mamma will punish you for being naughty?" asked Mabel.

The child smiled a mischievous response, and, throwing her arms around her mother's neck, kissed her rapturously.

"I can always persuade her to do as I wish," said Mrs. Harding, tearfully.

CHAPTER IX.

ELEANOR.

During the next ten years, Eleanor Harding grew more beautiful, more attractive, more intelligent, and more wilful. Her father learned that the wisest way to deal with her was to avoid collisions. When she made trouble in the school, he required the teacher to solve the problem, with the understanding that no humiliation was to accompany Eleanor's punishment. She was regnant in the primary rooms; the children followed and obeyed as much from love as fear; and, as she advanced into the higher grades, her influence increased. A boy who incurred her displeasure was so completely ostracized that he left the school. She was loved and feared by the boys, admired and hated by the girls. She dominated all, in an easy, quiet, masterful fashion, and seldom indulged in violent freaks of anger; such tactics had been necessary only in her contests with her father. With the withering scorn of her wonderful eyes, she could overthrow an adversary, or silence a grumbler by a look of supreme contempt, and again awaken the merriest mirth in the play of her eyebrows. She had no regard for things religious, and amused her friends by caricaturing the ministers or mimicking the deacons. The resignation of a teacher was sure to follow her dislike; for she was able to make the most cultured appear as a burlesque by her art in apish reproductions.

When she was sixteen, she was seen with her father on most occasions of social interest; and,

where she appeared, there gathered the set that boasted of brains and culture; the dolts and dullards avoided her vicinity. Often, the conceit was taken out of a coxcomb whose assurance brought him to experience the sharp edge of her wit. Her father indulged in the gratifying reflection that his daughter would soon eclipse the social preëminence of which his sister-in-law had once boasted. He was satisfied, also, with her attitude toward a host of beaux. She seemed to care for none.

Edgar Mills remained an invalid for a long time as a result of the injury he had received from the runaway; and, in his attendance on him, the Doctor often took his little girl with him. Through this association, there developed a strong friendship between the young man and the child, which ripened into a sort of guardianship attachment as Eleanor grew older. When she began to prefer his company to the more eligible boys of fewer years, her father considered it wise to interfere; and he met with the usual result. The more strenuously he opposed, the more frequently he found them together. Notwithstanding the fact that Edgar was twenty years older than the crowd, he managed to have himself invited to the parties of the younger set. Inez Ellis was often included in the invitation; but she was not present when, evening after evening for two years, Edgar happened to walk from school with Eleanor.

Dr. Harding's sons were attending college, Dick intending to take a medical course and Tom a literary course; the older to follow his father's profession, the younger to prepare for journalistic work and travel on the Continent. Barring sickness or outside interference, in two years, Eleanor would graduate from the city high school, when she, too, was to receive the polish of boarding-school life. A bond of sympathy and mutual love and trust ex-

isted between the mother and daughter; and Mabel Kendrick shared their confidence, the knowledge of which restrained the Doctor from going to his wife with vexations, until he was convinced that his own efforts to control affairs were useless. Exasperated over Edgar Mill's presumption, he swallowed his humiliation and requested his wife to speak to Eleanor, acknowledging that her influence might constrain the headstrong girl in the hour of temptation.

Mrs. Harding waited for a favorable opportunity and then approached her daughter by asking: "Do you enjoy Edgar Mills's company, Eleanor, that you let him walk home with you so often?"

"Of course I do, mamma. He is delightful to talk with. He knows so much and is so droll and humorous," Eleanor replied.

"Is it fair to Inez for you to monopolize her lover?" asked Mrs. Harding.

"I'll tell you, if you will not tell," said Eleanor, smiling.

"I'll not tell," her mother promised.

"Not tell papa?"

"Not until you give me permission."

"Papa would not believe me. He couldn't understand it, if he did. He has no romance in his makeup; and he has no respect for other people's confidence. So I can't confide in you unless you are sure he will not make you tell him," she stated annoyedly.

"Have I ever broken my promise to you, dear?" asked her mother.

"No, mamma; I'm not annoyed at you, only vexed at the way papa worries the life out of you. He will ask you what it is between Edgar and me, and, when you don't tell, then you catch *Hail Columbia*. If you could learn to lie a little, you could make life easier for yourself. Don't look so distressed, mamma. I don't mean all I say. I could not love you so, if I did not know how perfectly true you are. But this

affair with Edgar really does not amount to a row of pins, and I think I'd better not tell you."

"Tell me this much," asked Mrs. Harding; "do you care for Edgar Mills?"

"Care for him! O mamma," Eleanor laughed a cooing little giggle.

"He's a fine man, and well circumstanced, and Inez is a dear, good girl; and I would not like for you to interfere with them, unless your own feelings are enlisted," said Mrs. Harding.

"They are enlisted to the extent of doing everything in my power to win him away from Inez." Again Eleanor indulged in a queer laugh.

Her mother looked at her wonderingly.

"Can't you trust me, mamma?"

"Certainly, I trust you. But there are other men that I would prefer to have you marry."

"Marry! Mamma! I would not marry the Prince of Wales," laughed the girl.

"Then what do you intend to do with Edgar?"

"Teach him a lesson, do Inez a favor, and shield myself from the nuisance of the infatuated kids." Eleanor laughed merrily. "I will tell you one secret, mamma. Papa is going to be bamboozled into taking me on a trip to Europe this summer, to get me away from Edgar. That will be glorious fun. I'll be nice to him abroad, and bring back a copy of a Sir Joshua Reynolds for you, and some pictures of Landseer for Aunt Mabel."

The girl was not disappointed in her prophecy. She spent an interesting four months touring London, Paris, Italy, and Germany, with her father; and Dr. Harding had a short period of unalloyed pleasure. The hotels at which they stopped became the centre of interest, and the beauty of the American heiress attracted the titled Europeans, with whom very agreeable courtesies were exchanged.

When the Louiston school opened in September,

Eleanor, in consideration of her father's feelings and his generosity during their trip abroad, put Edgar Mills on probation for four months, promising him the usual walk home after that time. In the meantime, she flirted with every boy that had brains and wit to interest her. At the dance, at the rink, boating on the river, on the streets to and from school, wherever the amusement was gayest, boys accompanied her. Her lessons were easily learned and books thrown aside. Her father, exasperated beyond endurance by his wife's persistent excuses for her, declared that he would send her to a convent. The mother insisted that the girl was simply light-hearted and happy, and not interested in boys further than the triumph of holding them in subjection to her charms.

When, unexpectedly, she cut the whole crowd of admirers and renewed her sedate walks with Edgar Mills, her father stormed and her mother pondered the situation seriously.

Eleanor loved her mother very tenderly, and could not endure to see the lines of worry increase in her dear face on her account; so she took her Aunt Mabel into her confidence, and asked her to reassure her mother. Mabel watched the developments of the little romance with interest, and Dr. Harding's anxiety with pleasure.

The brothers came home for their summer vacation and they, with Eleanor and Aunt Mabel, spent a part of the time on Lake Geneva. In the fall, the boys entered on their last year of study, and Eleanor returned to her intimacy with Edgar Mills.

"It is the hardest thing I have ever tried to do, Aunt Mabel," said Eleanor, laughing. She had met her aunt down town, and they were coming home together. "It has been nearly three years, and I'm almost ready to give up. I don't like to fail, and

yet, paradoxical as it sounds, I hope I'll not be successful."

"What an odd girl Miss Inez is to persist in such a notion," Mrs. Kendrick replied.

"It seems quite sensible to me, Aunt Mabel; for men are so very fickle, one can't tell who is to be trusted," averred Eleanor.

"You have had abundance of experience, I surmise," said her aunt, smiling.

"Not much of a judge," laughed Eleanor. "The boys I have known, excepting Edgar Mills, seem so syncophantish and dull. I can enjoy a young man real well until he takes a notion that he's in love with me; then he's disgusting."

"And Edgar Mills isn't?" Mrs. Kendrick asked.

"No; for Edgar is genuine; and he keeps me interested because he is not perfectly sure of himself. At least, that is the way he strikes me," she pondered.

"Mr. Mills surely is old enough to know his own heart," laughed Mrs. Kendrick.

"O, Aunt Mabel, you know a kid of twelve years is surer of himself than a man of thirty-five," said Eleanor, merrily.

"Girls are different, are they?" and Mrs. Kendrick smiled in sympathy. "I think, if a woman truly loves a man, she will naturally trust him."

"I do, too," assented Eleanor; "naturally trusts and intuitively doubts."

"Woman's intuition stands in the way of a man's success, no doubt, some times," said Mrs. Kendrick.

"Well, I have just got to bring this Edgar Mills business to a climax soon. I can't give it much more time. I have promised the boys that I will graduate with the honors of my class. And I must work this year," stated Eleanor.

"I'm sure we shall all be proud of you. Come in and tell me the sequel after the climax."

They parted at the gate. Mabel Kendrick went slowly up the walk, smiling at her niece's confidence in herself and her assurance of personal ability, remembering her own past experience. There was a time when she felt capable of controlling her little world by the law of love and power of the will; believing that embryonic felicity was inherent in the individual, subject to his own quickening power, capable of development under all circumstances. But the past few years had convinced her that each in his own environment must be a law unto himself, and happiness depends on the periscope estimate of social and moral ethics.

"Mamma," called Eleanor from the parlor, "the carriage is to be here in twenty minutes. Please call Aunt Mabel and tell her to hurry, if she wishes to see me before I start to the dance. She asked me to let her know when I was dressed."

In a few minutes her mother and aunt came in, and the girl, radiant in happiness, stood before them. In her white dress and slippers and the white rose in her waving black hair, her throat like the Countess Potocka, her waist like a Paquin fashion-plate, her soft, white arms, dimpled elbows, and tapering fingers, the whole vibrating with the joy of living, she was a picture of purity. She held her skirts up fantastically, dancing gracefully around the room, and smiling back at her admirers.

"Edgar Mills will lose his head to-night," said Aunt Mabel.

"O, that is ended, Aunt Mabel. I was coming to tell you to-day, but was too busy. I had to have my dress taken back to the dressmaker's. It was too tight across the bust; and she put this bit of lace in here; but it makes it prettier, don't you think?" she asked.

"The dress is lovely in every way. And what did you do with Edgar?" asked her mother.

"Do you know how long he has been going with Inez Ellis?" Eleanor asked in reply.

"'Going with.' When I was a girl, we would ask how long a couple had been sweethearts," laughed Aunt Mabel.

"They have been 'keeping company' off and on, for seventeen years," said Mrs. Harding.

"Before I was born, how funny!" laughed Eleanor, dancing again and watching her feet in the cheval glass.

"Tell us about Mr. Mills?" asked Mrs. Kendrick.

"He asked to take me to the dance to-night, and I told him I had promised to go with my father. Of course, he did not believe me. I didn't expect him to. But I had seen Inez and told her the situation had become stale and made her agree to go with him if I didn't. I told Aunt Mabel, mamma; but I didn't tell you that—Well, anyway Inez—You know, Inez's parents separated about four years ago, and her mother died, broken-hearted; and she had filled Inez full of the notion that if she really loved a man she must not marry him until she was thoroughly convinced that he would be faithful to her. The more Inez loved Edgar, the more she feared to marry him, lest his affections stray to some other girl when it was too late; so she begged me to 'cut her out' if I could," she laughed merrily.

"You were sure you could," said her aunt.

"Inez ought to be satisfied. It took me so long; and then I wasn't very successful. I spent one year just praising and talking about Inez, until he acknowledged it was more pleasure to hear me talk about her than to hear her talk. The next year, he began to insist on my talking about myself. No; that was the year after I had been abroad. I think

I do tell about European places and people interestingly. It is so easy for me to embellish; and, if I forget how things looked or what people said, I make it more entertaining from my own brain. Papa says I get that from you, Aunt Mabel. Humbugging, he means." She stopped to view herself in the glass.

"Go on, Eleanor. Tell it all," said her mother.

"O yes, I'd forgotten. Well, last night we walked and walked. Mr. Mills was sober and I cooed and prattled; and I was looking as sweet as sweet. I had on that new lawn that has the openwork on the front, with the peek-a-boo waist; and in my corset-cover was pink satin ribbon. When I sighed, the glimpse of my neck that peeked through the embroidery was real bewitching. You needn't smile, I know it was. Pretty soon he took hold of my arm abruptly and said: 'Miss Eleanor, I want you to marry me. And you must answer me now.' Sure, but I was taken by surprise! I had planned a dozen different things to say at this important moment. I had intended being awfully serious and sympathetic; but, it struck me the wrong way, and I just laughed and laughed. Then, when he didn't fly all to pieces and get mad, I laughed the more.

"At last, I said: 'What do you want to marry me for?' And he replied: 'Because I am tired of waiting for Inez. Poor little girl, she will feel pretty blue; but she has kept me miserable a long time; and I know that you and I can enjoy each other. I am very fond of you. What do you say?'"

"'But I want the man that I marry to love me,' I answered. 'No, you don't. You get disgusted with a fellow as soon as he manifests anything of a grand passion. We would be happy together. You really are adorable. You make a man think and act and live,' he said.

"'Mr. Mills, I'm obliged to you; but I advise

you to return to Inez. Don't tell her any of this foolishness; but remember this: I am capable of loving as well as you are; and, when the man comes along who is handsome and independent, good-natured and jolly, with a strong magnetic power that can subdue my will to his own, I will marry him.' How I could love such a man! It makes me tremble to feel how hard I could love him." She clasped her hands across her breast in an imaginary embrace of her ideal hero.

"There is your carriage, dear. Don't dance too long. Your father is waiting. Good-bye." They threw her light opera-coat around her and watched her drive off.

She managed to get a few private words with Inez Ellis in the early part of the evening, and assured her that she had tried in every way to entice her lover and win his love and had failed; and she averred that if *she* could not succeed, Inez need never fear the machinations of others in the future.

Later, while she was dancing with Edgar Mills, he whispered: "You will be bridesmaid for Inez, won't you?"

She replied with hearty pleasure: "Indeed, I shall be proud of the privilege."

The remainder of the school-year was spent in genuine studious application, and Eleanor Harding merited the honors conferred on her as valedictorian of her class. Her popularity was evidenced in the profusion of flowers and pretty gifts that the ushers piled on her table in front of the stage, after she had delivered her oration, the evening of the school commencement.

"You are the bulliest girl I ever looked at," said Dick, holding her at arm's length, as the crowd filed past, congratulating the line of graduates. "I wish we could have had you at college with us."

"I'm proud of you, Sister," said Tommy. "I must have a picture of you, just as you are to-night, to head my first sensational story."

The Harding boys had finished their college course; and, after a few weeks' vacation, Dick was to go into an office with an old physician, who anticipated retiring from active labor in a short time. The location was in a town of a few thousand inhabitants sixty miles from Louiston. Tommy was to start in on a Chicago paper for a year's experience, preparatory to being sent abroad. Mrs. Kendrick and her niece were to revisit Lake Geneva, during summer, and take Mrs. Harding with them for a month, at least.

■

CHAPTER X.

A DISCOVERY.

"How long have you been running on the river?" Uncle Henry asked an old negro man.

"Nigh onter forty-five year," replied the old negro.

"Yo' see, I run on de Mis'sippi boat, an' on de lo'er Ohio, an' on de upp'r river boat. Onest I wuz secon' mate on de Gen'l Lytle. I wuz on de 'Merica de time her klided wid de Unit'd States, an' set de river er fire wid oil. Yassar, et wuz er myrac'lous 'scape fur me. I kin nebber fo'git dat night."

The two men were sitting on bales of hay, watching the steamer deck-hands. Between landings, the negroes were playing craps, or scrambling for pennies that some man on the upper deck threw down among them for the amusement of the passengers.

"You remember 'bout everything that happened after the war, I reckon?" queried Uncle Henry.

"I 'low my mem'ry ain't like et uze ter wuz; but I mind er lot er things. We had er coff'n shipped down ter Vicksburg. Yassah, lab'l'd squar'—corner's 'quest—died fer heart er fail'n. An' good Lawd-er-mussy! I heared sed dat de box wuz chuck full er guns an' 'munition. Et wuz no dead en, jes' ter hep de rebs shoot de Yanks. Nuder trip we tuck er bar'l er apples ter Nashville, an' sho's yo' born, de youn' man ez wuz gwine 'long, he sed ter me; sez he, 'der er five hundred doll' in dat bar'l. Yassah, et wuz Norder'n gold."

"But why did he tell you?" asked Uncle Henry, skeptically.

"Et wuz doan gone up de grade ouden de reach er my ole fist," laughed old Ezekiel.

The moon was flickering over the water. The deck-hands, tired of gambling, were stretched at full length over the floor, singing the old plantation melodies.

"I had some powerful strange experiences after the war," encouraged Uncle Henry; "but you beat me. I've been on these boats 'bout four years an' you're the first man I've found who knows anything. These younger niggers ain't got sense 'nough to remember."

"Yassah! yassah, I tak' er heap er pride er remenicen'," said Ezekiel, scratching his head, flattered with Henry's encomium, unsuspecting of a deeper motive. "Cose yo' ben liben wid white folks. Yo' ben edjecated, an' I jes' er boss'n niggers. Jes' er same, I'se 'spectable. Neber see me down on de flo' snoozin'. Now, dis er night 'minds me er queer 'sperience. De moon flick'r'd ober de water skeery like. Yo' could jest see ghosts comin' up an' down ouden de river; an' I know'd sumfen ed happ'n dat night. An' sho' nuff, we land 'long de Indyan shor', an' four tall men come er 'toben er long box down from de weeds. De krees run down my back. Lawd-er-mussy, sho's yo' born dem bushes wuz full er sperets." The old negro shuddered. "'Heah, yo' nigger, git hole dis er box er bacon,' yelled de big fat mate. Nigger kin smell hog bacon er mile er mo', an' I know'd er wuz no hog bacon in dat crate. I seed er youn' lad er look'n arter dat er freight, an' sez zi: 'I'se yo' man.' Sez ze: 'Eber see dat?' 'Nosah,' sez zi. An' he shut his fist ober er five dolla' gold piece. 'Dat fur you,' sez ze. 'Thank ye, sah,' sez zi. An' he tech'd his hat an' walked

up dem stairs. Dat swing er his'n—'ristocrat—South'rn—I'se seed 'm. Can't make 'm North. By em by, ez I wuz gwine to sto' de freight 'way, I kivered dat box clean all up."

"Didn't you leave room for it to get the air?" interrupted Henry, excitedly.

"Lawd-er-mussy, bacon doan' want no air."

"But you said it wasn't bacon," objected Henry, impatiently.

"Gimme time, Uncle Henry; I doan fo'got. Lemme see, 'fore mawnen', I heared er noise. Sho's yo' born, sumfen mov' roun' dat er box; my hyar straighten' outen de kinks, an' riz up ter see er ghost, an' de lad, he whisp'r'd, 'All safe?' 'Jes so,' sez zi. An' he wuz gone again."

"Where did you put the box off?" asked Henry, again interrupting the old negro in his story.

"Five miles 'bove de city. Yassah, in ole Kaintuck," Ezekiel replied.

"Are you sure? You said you had most forgot."

"Sho's yo' born. Doan I see er toted shor', an' de lad sitten' on er fur haf 'n 'our. An' when we wuz puffin' 'way down stream, I heard 'em whistle, an' er wagon an' four men come outen de bushes an' hawl de box 'way," explained the old negro.

With a sigh of disappointment, Henry asked indifferently: "Did you get the five dollars?"

But Uncle Ezekiel did not hear the question. He was enjoying a hearty laugh all to himself.

"What's the matter with you?" asked Henry.

"He-he-hee!" chuckled the old negro. "I mind dat ole fat mate. He jes' cuss ter beat any mate I eber seed when dat box wuz order'd ter go er shor'. Lawd-er-mussy, whar wuz er? De fat mate, he cuss dat black nigger, he, he, he. N'awful mean nigger!" Again Ezekiel laughed, recalling how he escaped while another got the basting.

"What was in the box?" asked Henry, annoyed.

Again and again Henry thought he was on the track of the information he was seeking, to be as often disappointed. One yarn after another he had led this old man to tell, watching every point for the clue he was hunting. "Did you get the five dollars?"

"Sho's yo' born. When dat fat mate wuz er cuss'n kaze de box wuz kiver'd up, de lad er sed ter me: 'See you 'gin, 'bout er week,' an' I felt sumfin cold right dar," and Ezekiel slapped his fingers over his palm and rubbed it, in memory of the gold piece.

"Did you see him again?" asked Henry.

"Yassah, yassah. An' er tole me dat he had de body er his onkle in dat er box. He wuz er Confederate officer. 'Scaped fro' Ohio prison, an' er died 'fore er crost de river. An' he tuck er body home."

"Did you ever see any boxes of gold or crates of china or cases of candlesticks sent back South after the war?" asked Uncle Henry. "Some folks buried their treasures. In our part they shipped them away to friends up North. Some fellows just threw money away. My old Misses was fixing a tombstone in the graveyard and found gold pieces scattered all 'round. Must have been some party close pressed, or skedaddling."

"Nebber had no sich luck," replied the old steamboat man. "I do mind er seein' one queer box, an' I reckon er wuz full er gold. Nebber seeded er findin' outen 'bout dat box."

"Where did it come from?" questioned Henry.

Another landing and its incumbent duties separated the men, and several days intervened before Henry found Ezekiel alone.

"Wake up! Uncle; I can't let you sleep a night like this. Here, talk to me," said Uncle Henry, shaking the old negro off a pile of sacks of wheat.

Ezekiel arose to a sitting posture with his chin in his hands and his elbows on his knees.

"You ain't told me 'bout that last box," said Uncle Henry.

"What fur yo' allers axen 'bout boxes?" yawned the negro. "Neber yo' heard 'bout dat gal I hid in 'mongst de freight? Sho'? Dat gal, O Lawd-er-mussy, dat gal wuz Kaintuckian true blue. Eyes, bright er dat star 'bove yo' head; cheeks redder'n dis bandanna er mine, whar ez clean; feet—Lawd-er-mussy, I kin see dat er foot now. Her dad own'd me 'fore de war. He wuz up country buyin' cattle; an' while he wuz gone dat little gal run er way wid er luber. Den 'n ole skezicks telegram ter 'm ter ketch er on de boat. I seed de ole man come ridin' down ter de bank, wavin' his torch ter hail de boat. De youn' man er run up on top an' begg'd de Capt'n not ter land de boat. Pilot heard 'em say: 'Ten dollars an' you doan let dat man git on.' 'Too late,' boat wuz swingin' round. De little gal seed 'm an', clean down in er hull, she run arter me.

"'O, Unk Zekiel, hide me from Dad,' er cried. An' I jes' tuck her up in my arms like I doan when er wuz er baby an' toted er down behin' er pack er boxes an' kivered her wid er buffalo robe. Ole dad er stormed an' hunted an' watched de state-room whar de clerk sed she wuz sleepin'. He, he, he, Dad er hired er cabin-boy ter watch de outside door. But Lawd-er-mussy, kain't do nuttin' when youn' folks ez lubbin' each udder. I 'lowed de little gal wuz skeered an' lonesome: an' I mozied back an' front, an' sung er song. When er heard me, er laughed, soft like.

"De ole dad's aboard, frownin' awful hard—

Lay low, Sissy; lay low, Sissy.

Trust in de Lawd; ole Zekiel he's on guard—

Lay low, Sissy; lay low, Sissy.

"When dat er boat whistled fur Aberdeen I'se powerful glad. De youn' man he hurry up de bank, an' I follow wid de buffalo robe ober my arm, an' de little gal hid inside er. Squire Sheldon wuz ready, an' sho' married 'em. Lawd-er-mussy, dey went back ter de boat, an' de ole dad wuz soun' asleep in his chair. De little gal touched his nose an sed: 'Daddy, sleepin' when yo' gal ez married!' Lawd-er-mussy, er jumped an' I sed: 'Sho', Massah, I'se de witness.'"

Again the landing separated the companions, and weeks passed before their private conversation was renewed. Henry had served a term as porter on all the different boats that travelled the river past the Farnam homestead; and, so far, he had failed in securing light on the secret mission with which he was intrusted. He had been unable to find a man, among deckhands or officers, who had been in any way associated with the mysterious transactions of which he was privy. The information he desired to obtain might so affect the honor of innocent persons that the faithful servant was using every precaution to avoid exciting the curiosity of those he tried to catechize. Having found that the old negro, Ezekiel, had been running on the river for a period overlapping the time of his personal experience, he wisely concluded that some clue to the mystery was stowed away in his brain; and he must, by patiently listening to his tales of steamboating, finally draw on the perplexing problem without arousing suspicion.

Ezekiel prided himself on being able to comprehend the mysterious, and, characteristically, forgetting what he could not explain. Consequently Henry had to call him back to the starting point again and again.

"You didn't tell me 'bout that box of gold?" questioned Henry, when they were alone.

"I doan fo'got all 'bout er," said Ezekiel.

"O no, you haven't," encouraged Henry.

"'Pears ter me like yo' ought ter 'member dat box," mused Ezekiel.

"What was it like?"

"Like er ole iron box, 'cept der wuz holes all roun' de top, big 'nuff ter poke er silber dolla' in. I been tryin' ter 'member whar I seed yo'. Ain't yo' one er de men who help load er on de wagon?" and Ezekiel looked closely at his companion.

"Where was it?" questioned Henry, evasively.

"Down to Marse Fillmore's landin'. De label said er wuz fur de parson. He married Miss Laura Fillmore," mused Ezekiel.

"But the minister was not living," said Henry.

"I know'd ez yo' waz dar," grinned Ezekiel. "De preacher's name wuz Falconer. I 'low dey doan 'spect dat iron box; 'case dey wuz down ter de landin' ter git 'Miss' Laura's furniture. She come down ter live wid her gal, arter de parson died," continued Ezekiel.

"How did you know all this?" Henry asked, curiously.

"Sho', my old 'oman b'long ter ole man Fillmore. She cook Miss Laura er weddin' dinner. She wuz on de boat an' seed er. I neber been in dat part er ole Kaintuck. Wer had so many picconninnies, never hed no chanct ter go."

Again Henry turned the old negro back to the subject of his search. "Where did the iron box come from?"

"Lawd-er-mussy, how kin I tell? I doan know. But I lay, I er neber fo'git de face er dat man. We wuz jes' 'bout ter shuve outen de wharf er city er Louiston. De bell had rung fur passengers ter git on an' off; an' I seed er man on er rickerty ole wagon, scurryin' down grade, wavin' his hat ter de boat.

He jes' look'd like er wild ghost." Ezekiel was growing sleepy.

"What kind of a wagon?" asked Henry.

"Huxter wagon wid er top broke off," the tired old man replied.

"Did you hear anything that the man said?" asked Henry, excitedly.

"Can't say ez I do. No time. Boat pullin' out. I seed 'em pay de freight an' point ter de 'dress. Den I help tote er 'board. Heavy! Whee!"

"How old was the man? What did he look like?"

"I reckon, now, sumers 'bout thirty. He doan look like nuttin' ter me. Jes' skeered ter death 'fear'd er miss de boat. I do mind now," chuckled the old negro, rousing from his stupor, as the boat whistled for some landing, "dat man had one ear cut off, an' I low'd er wuz er great gran'son er dat man de Apostle Peter whacked wid his sword fur b'trayin' de Lawd."

Henry drew a deep, long sigh. Then, said to himself: "D. V., D. V.! A man minus one ear in a large city—like a needle in a haystack. The Lord willing, I'll find him."

He remained on the boat until the end of the month and a new porter was secured to fill his place; but he gathered nothing more from Ezekiel that could aid him in his search.

CHAPTER XI.

BOARDING SCHOOL.

The sun was slipping from the zenith, and the leaves trembled and blushed under the caresses of the first fall winds. The squirrels were busy seeking their homes, that abundant store might be laid in for the coming winter. The birds were following the sun to the south, and the flowers were scattering their pollen to mate with kindred pistils before they lay buried beneath the falling leaves. While the summer was preparing to retire for a season of repose and recuperation, young humanity was quickening into activity and acute energy. In the city of Danboro, the college halls were crowded by bustling servants, disposing of boxes and trunks; young women were flitting in every direction, nervously getting their belongings together, merrily greeting each other, or tearfully saying good-bye to parents or guardians. The campus was overrun by students greeting old comrades and discussing the ball teams for the ensuing year. The gymnasium rang with the laughter of the girls, and, under deft fingers, the pianos vibrated a welcome to the music pupils. The dignified officials looked with gratification at the exuberance of joyous student life, and, behind a mask of severity, smiled in remembrance of the time when they, too, could run and laugh and play.

For the first few days, unrestricted intercourse was permitted between the college and seminary students, to enable brothers and sisters to separate

their possessions and become adjusted to their own spheres. Russell and Ralph Farnam had returned, bringing their sister, Varena, with them. The brothers were in the junior class; and, as the course of study for the young women was limited, compared to the curriculum required by the college, their sister expected to be graduated from the seminary in two years, and together bring their school life to a close. Ralph, whose intercourse with the young ladies for the past four years had been restrained by conventionalities, was anticipating the full enjoyment of his popularity, through the close proximity the presence of his sister would secure for him. He was counting, too, on a pleasure in bringing his brother under the influence of that galaxy of lovely girls. Duty would require them to call to see their sister on the regular reception evenings; and, if there could not be found some fair maid to win him from the serious absorption of his studies, he must be given up as a piece of adamant, impervious to feminine charms.

Now, while Ralph was here, there and everywhere, meeting the old friends, greeting the new students, inquiring for sisters and cousins, Russell was in the dormitory, unpacking their trunk and arranging their room, preparatory to serious study.

"What's the matter with your brother?" asked one of the boys of Ralph.

"Nothing, only more quiet and serious," replied Ralph. "Why?"

"He looks like he'd been sick," replied an awkward, overgrown boy, who had visited the school in the spring and returned to enter the preparatory. "I'd take him to be older than you are; but Sister says you're twins. Are you?"

"Yes," was Ralph's laconic reply.

"They say you looked older when you first came to school," continued Horace Runyan. "Everybody

thinks I'm a good deal older than the record in the family Bible indicates."

"Your sister did not come, did she?" asked Ralph.

"Yes. She's going to take French and painting this year. Mother sent her back to look after me till I get acquainted. And Sarah told me to make a friend of you," said Horace, with an embarrassed smile.

"Did she mean it?" asked Ralph, in surprise. "She knows I'm a shiftless, don't-care sort of a fellow, learning my lessons in order to pass my exams, and there it ends. I'm friendly with everybody because they are all clever to me. But if Miss Sarah thinks I can do you any favors, I'll be glad to try. She's been a mighty good friend to me, dear old girl."

"You call 'm all dear, don't you?" asked Horace, grinning.

"Girls? Sure! I'm in love with about twenty. They're like sunshine in winter, snowflakes in summer, making existence worth while by exhilarating surprises. Tell your sister that a glorious new girl came on the train this morning; that reminds me of her promise——"

"There goes Sister, now," interrupted Horace. "We can overtake her before she gets to the corner." The boys quickened their steps and came up on either side of Sarah Runyan.

"Oh! You startled me, Horace. But you're a good boy, obeying instructions promptly. Where did he find you, Ralph? I'm glad to see you," Sarah said.

"Where do you suppose he found me? Staring up at the Sem. windows, hoping for a glimpse of a pretty face?" answered Ralph, laughing.

"What did you promise me last year?" Sarah asked.

"To let the girls alone this year, provided you'd

get Russell in love with one," stated Ralph, promptly.

"Yes. Well, you must give me time to get acquainted with the new girls and find one that has the qualifications necessary to enlist his interest. It will be quite a bit of fun; for Russell is a problem," said Sarah, smiling.

"Have you seen Russ, yet?" asked Ralph.

"No; I've been busy getting located. Being such an *old* girl, and having to teach some classes, too, they wanted me to take charge of one floor. I wouldn't assume the responsibility; so I'm not fully settled yet. There's a very handsome young girl in my room. I've not seen her; but, in all probability, I'll be domiciled with her," explained Sarah. "Where is your brother now?"

"Doing my work, as usual. I'll find my books all laid out in order and my traps all put away. Keeps me from missing grandmother," said Ralph. "But blamed if I know what's got the matter with Russ this summer. Acts like a fellow whose divinity had refused to shine for him alone."

"But he has no divinity," laughed Sarah.

"Never had. There's the problem. Solve it," urged Ralph.

"Give me time," demanded the young woman.

Horace had fallen behind with a student in his own class and missed this enigmatical conversation.

Varena Farnam was a specimen of the perfectly happy school-girl. Her goal had been reached—going off to college. She had a trunk full of pretty clothes, and every article was in perfect condition. Now she was revelling in the delight of unpacking in a pretty little room, with windows that looked toward the dormitory in which her brothers dwelt; of unwrapping dainty little articles and consulting a modest room mate about the prettiest place to hang them, of arranging bric-a-brac and dressing the

toilet-stand, of adjusting the study-table and beautifying the dresser. Her room was in a quiet part of the building with easy access to the music floor. One window opened on a balcony that overlooked the park. In the distance, a stream came gushing down from the hills and wound its way among clumps of trees that dotted its banks, back of the college buildings. Russell had, by special request, secured this location for his sister, that she might enjoy the view of the river and be able to exchange handkerchief greetings with him. It had been his habit, spring and fall, to take his books and study under a large hickory-nut tree that stood alone near a small group of saplings.

Varena, shaking the wrinkles from her dresses as she took them from a packing-box, held them up for her roommate's admiration.

"They told me I was to have a nice country girl to room with this year. You don't dress and act like a country girl," commented Mary Baker, seriously.

"Where are you from?" asked Varena, naively.

"From Milwaukee, Wisconsin. You're a Kentuckian, aren't you?"

"Don't I look like one?"

"Yes; but you don't talk as most of the Southern girls do," replied Mary, honestly.

"You mean like the darkies talk?" asked Varena, laughing merrily.

Mary remained silent under what she interpreted as ridicule.

"I'm not laughing at you. I'm thinking how pleased Grandmother will be to know that her training is recognized. Don't you know that the country people are among the true aristocracy of Kentucky? The same farm has been held under one family name for generations. Finden, that's our place, goes back to the first settlers; the land was deeded to them by

the government," explained Varena, turning to face her roommate, pride of birth speaking in every curve of her youthful aplomb.

"I didn't mean to offend you," replied Mary. "We'll get along together, though I'm a bit disappointed."

"I'm not offended, and it isn't kind to talk that way at the beginning. We have to like each other if we want to study together with any pleasure. I'm sure I've been thinking you were very nice," stated Varena.

"O you're nice enough. I like you immensely," Mary hastened to say. "It wasn't that. It was a fear that you wouldn't be studious, while I just have to study. I borrowed the money to educate myself for a teacher, and I've no time to waste on pretty clothes."

"Will my clothes annoy you?" asked Varena.

"They distract my attention a little, but I think I can get used to them," Mary replied soberly.

"Of course, you think I will waste my time. Don't you?" said Varena, laughingly.

"Your dresses are lovely, and you are really very pretty yourself; besides, you have a little telltale air about you, that I——. Well, I hope you will like to study." Mary spoke with such droll earnestness that Varena turned to the task of completing her unpacking.

From the bottom of the box, she held up a large picture of her grandmother and cried impulsively: "There's the dearest, sweetest, best, and prettiest creature that ever lived." She kissed it affectionately and hung it where she would see it when she first opened her eyes each morning.

"Now, Mary Baker, please tell me what there is about me that tells tales, and I'll forgive you for being disappointed in me," Varena urged.

"I think I am going to be agreeably disappointed,

because you will study for love of your grandmother," said Mary, still serious. "You love her," looking up at the picture, "and you love to be loved."

"Of course," responded Varena. "Did you ever know any one who didn't enjoy being loved?"

"There are many who care more for glory, wealth, and ambition, than affection of any kind," said Mary morosely.

"We'll not class such vain, selfish people among our friends," Varena declared, tumbling from a chair on which she had been standing to hang a copy of Murillo's "Madonna of Love." "But you have not yet interpreted my telltale physiognomy."

"It's not your pretty face, nor your soft voice, nor your graceful figure, but something in the whole combination that shows you've been a favorite with girls and boys, young and old, and you still expect to be the favorite," Mary answered in all seriousness.

"And why not?" Varena laughed heartily.

"You'll have a larger world to conquer and more applicants for the honor. In our little community at home, I was considered quite a clever girl. I was respected for my ambitions and learning; and, really, the folks looked up to me in my plain clothes," Mary almost smiled.

"And haven't they the same regard, since you have added two years of boarding-school experience to your knowledge?" questioned Varena.

"The difference is in me," Mary replied. "Two years ago I thought I was quite a bright girl; but I'm beginning to realize how little I know, and I find so many way in advance of me."

"And I'll venture to assert that you have more learning stored away in that modest head of yours than half those who make a display of their wisdom. I think we are fortunate in being placed together. I need you, and vice versa. Come out on the bal-

cony for a breath of fresh air; then we must get ready for dinner."

They stepped through the window, and Varena's eyes swept the vista, until she distinguished the large hickory tree her brother had described to her. There sat Russell with his books. A radiance of exquisite pleasure played over her face. She drew a deep breath of the fresh breeze and waved and waved.

"Is that your sweetheart?" asked Mary in surprise, watching the exchange of signals.

"Sweetheart!" laughed Varena. "I love him a thousand times better than any girl ever loved a sweetheart. That's my brother; the dearest boy that ever lived."

"Wait until he finds a sweetheart; then you won't think he is such a good brother. I loved my brother and trusted him, too, and he married and used up my little earnings and has not found it convenient to repay me." Mary indulged in a quaint little laugh.

"If any girl should come between me and my brother—— Well, I wouldn't kill her, because I don't want to spend eternity in Hades; but—I don't know. He has promised not to fall in love till I meet my fate; so I guess I'll not worry." She waved a good-bye and followed Mary into their room.

"Is that the dinner bell? You lead the way, Mary, and tell me what to do. You know I'm green in boarding-school. Let me fix your hair a little. I'll have to put this other comb of mine in. Hold still. That looks very pretty. Did you know your collar was soiled? Take this of mine. Hurry, let me fix it. It is soft and fleecy about your throat—see; that is becoming to you. You mustn't wear those stiff collars any more. Just let me tone you up a little, and you'll be a beauty."

"That's the first compliment I've had in Danboro. I'm ashamed of saying I was disappointed."

Mary looked so sorry Varena kissed her, saying:

"You were afraid I would not study, that was all. I'm not sorry you spoke truthfully; for I have learned to know you. Honesty is a cardinal virtue. Lead the way, please," said Varena.

In the hall they met Sarah Runyan, who greeted them cordially: "Hello, Mary; you are back again. How well you are looking! And this is your new roommate, Miss Farnam. I know your brothers quite well, and hope we shall be good friends.

"Thank you. I have heard Ralph speak of you often," Varena answered.

"I've been a kind of an older sister to the boys, Ralph especially. He will not need me now, with you here," said Sarah.

"You have a brother coming this year, Ralph said," Varena replied.

"Yes; Horace is here. Perhaps we can swop sisterly courtesies. I would appreciate having you help him a little. He's a big, bashful, overgrown boy; and friends like you and Mary Baker can steer him through the hard places," said Sarah.

"I'm sure he is the very friend that I shall need myself," spoke Varena sincerely.

"Thank you. Are you going to room together?" She turned to Mary Baker with her question.

"Of course! Why not?" Mary answered.

"I thought you might have had an experience similar to mine, and agreed to disagree," and Sarah smiled.

"You?" questioned Mary, in surprise. "Sarah graduated two years ago, the first year that I was here," she explained to Varena.

"Then last year I took a few extra branches, so that I could be with my cousin, a pretty gay little girl; and this year I'm here to get Horace started in the right course. I will teach one or two classes in French. Needn't hurry, that was the first bell," added Sarah.

"And where are you located this year?" Mary asked.

"The faculty requested me to take a room in the south wing and superintend the third floor, and I declined. Then they said I could share my old room; but they had already put one of the new girls in there. They were sure I would enjoy being with her; for she was very beautiful and bright, and had come highly recommended. She proved to be too magnificent for me," said Sarah, laughing good-naturedly.

"What was the trouble?" asked Mary, with a guilty feeling in her own heart. "Perhaps you were hasty in conclusions."

"I think not. She's a handsome girl, to tell the truth, and rich as a Rothschild. She looks like a Jewess, with her black hair and eyes; and, perhaps, I angered her with my first question, for I asked if her parents were Jews. She flashed her eyes on me, and they sparkled for a moment; but she quietly replied, 'No.' Then, when we began unpacking she asked: 'How shall we divide the space?' 'What space?' I questioned, and she said: 'In the dresser; which drawer would you prefer, the upper or lower?' I mumbled 'Makes no difference to me.' Then she said: 'I'll take the bottom one of the two large drawers. Which of the two little ones do you want?' I answered, 'I don't care.' So she began putting her little trinkets in the left one. When she went to hang up her dresses she demanded: 'Which end of the closet would you rather have?' Of course I laughed. 'Which you please.' She turned toward me quickly and said: 'When you leave it to me to decide politeness requires me to appropriate the least desirable part,' and I returned: 'I don't see why. If I cared to choose, I would take the part I preferred,' and she answered back: 'Well, I'm a lady,' I felt kind o' annoyed at that remark, but only

said: 'Last year we had everything in common, and even wore each other's clothes.' She looked at me with those wide-open eyes again, and spoke more mildly: 'You were generous, for your clothes are very handsome; but there is a personality about my things peculiar to myself alone. I can't make it common property!' About that time I wanted to sink through the floor," said Sarah, smiling.

"She seemed to be fair about everything," asserted Mary.

"Yes; she was fair and straightforward, and thought she was doing the square thing. But when she came to dividing the wall, and having her Titian and Tintoretto and Carlo Dolci on one side and my little photograph gallery—pictures of nearly every boy and girl in college—on the other side, it struck me as ridiculous. So I asserted myself, saying: 'Look here, Miss Harding, I don't believe we can be very happy together. What do you think?' She coolly replied: 'That depends altogether upon you. I am satisfied. Our room is large, and we have a fine view of the campus from the little balcony under our window.'

"But I won't contend with any one, and I knew she would have her own way in everything. Besides, there's a congenial little girl in No. 16; so I've asked to go over there. Miss Harding will sit at your table, Miss Farnam, and she's a beauty. Looks like she might be the daughter of an Italian king." Sarah Runyan completed her narrative as the last bell announced dinner.

"How old is Miss Harding?" inquired Varena.

"I should think she was a year or two older than you are," replied Sarah. "I think I'll have to introduce your brothers to her. Horace says the boys are wild about her already. Ralph, lucky as usual, carried her valise from the train to the hack, and says she's just the girl for Russell. Well, I hope

the dinner is good. I'm hungry. Come over to No. 16 sometimes."

The young women in the dining-hall were on the *qui vive* with interest over the entrance of the new potentialities of the junior class. It was recognized at once that the new members would constitute centres around which everything of interest would circulate during the year. Which would have the stronger following, could not yet be conjectured. One thing alone was evident as the fixed stars: each in her separate sphere would form a nucleus around which other orbs revolve; but no influence could cause their personalities to blend or join forces. Like Mars and Venus, one was a compelling energy, the other a winning power; equally beautiful, in distinguishable types; equally brilliant in diversified forms; equally lovable by different characters.

Without prearrangement, Eleanor Harding and Varena Farnam were seated on opposite sides of the table at the right of the teachers, who occupied the end seats. There were fourteen juniors in the class. Twelve were old girls, who regarded the addition to their number with varying emotions. The generous felt a pride in the new element; the selfish, envious; the phlegmatic, curious. Eleanor and Varena each recognized the strong personality of the other and marked her for a rival. The former simulated an indifference to her competitor; while the latter, carefully analyzed her opponent in every feature, article of dress, coil of hair, poise of head, and contour as a whole, with the result that she was satisfied with herself and glad that she possessed the fair complexion and golden hair of her grandmother.

Two days intervened before the momentous first Sunday. This was the crucial event in the beginning of the year, this first church service. The minister's test, developed as a homiletic sermon or a practical talk, was of minor importance. Even the music, or-

dinarily an enjoyable part of the service, was ignored in the interest of grading the charms and calibre of the new students. The most perfect toilet that money and taste could afford was to be seen; for the dress worn on this occasion might have a more vital influence on the future than the elaborate party gown hereafter.

Standing before the mirror in her room, putting the finishing touches to her toilet, Varena saw over her shoulder that Mary Baker was sitting quietly reading, and she asked:

"Aren't you going to dress for church? You will be late."

"I am dressed," said Mary, naively.

"Have you no church dress?" Varena asked in surprise.

"I have only this one suit. I can't afford another this year. I'm living on borrowed money," and Mary went on reading.

"Why, that's too bad," pondered Varena.

Mary misinterpreted her tone, and, feeling that Varena was ashamed of her, reminded her that they need not walk together. "You can walk with one of the other girls, I'll not feel hurt."

"Mary," said Varena, "if you had a friend who liked you awfully well and asked a favor of you, would you grant it?"

"Sure, if I could," was the prompt answer.

"Well, I'm that friend, and I want you to wear my blue silk dress," said Varena, smiling.

Mary clasped her hands in one moment of ecstasy, then dropped them in her lap, and, laughing quaintly, said: "I can't do that. I'd feel like a fish out of water and would act as awkward; but I do appreciate your asking me to wear it."

"Then wear my brown Henrietta-cloth. That will not feel fine, and it's just the color of your eyes. Do, please; try it on," Varena urged.

"What would your brothers think of seeing me in your dress?" asked Mary, hesitating.

"They would not know it was mine. There are so many suits alike," pleaded Varena.

Mary was sorely tempted, but still hesitated. "The girls would recognize it when they see you in it."

"But I shall not be seen in it. If it fits you nicely, it is yours. I don't need it."

"No! no!" objected Mary. "I can't let you do that."

"Grandmother would want me to divide with you. She always made us divide with our friends. So if you don't take it, I shall give it to the chambermaid. If you don't hurry, we'll be late."

Mary let herself be dressed; and, as the suit was adjusted to her slim figure, her face underwent a curious change. The eyes grew brighter, the cheeks took on a deeper tinge of red, the little dimples deepened, and the lips softened.

"O you are lovely!" gushed Varena. "How about a hat? I don't want to give you my brown one. I need it with my brown silk; but your black one won't do. Where is that little brown turban you wear for common? Here's an extra brown plume I can pin around it—that's lovely. Don't push it so far back. Let a little hair show on your forehead. That's it. Hurry, there's the last bell. O, you're a peach; but you haven't any gloves."

"Yes; I have some lisle thread gloves, and it's fortunate for you that you have a small hand, so you can't make me put on your gloves." She laughed merrily, surprised at her own delight.

When they reached the hall where the girls were collecting, preparatory to forming in line, she felt very uncomfortable in her consciousness of their surprise and comments. But on the street and in the church, she was forced to feel gratified; for she could

not fail to see that she had made a pleasant impression. Old acquaintances smiled more cordially, and strangers appeared interested.

It is the perfect dressing that brings out the brilliance of the diamond; it is the proper setting that enhances the value of the gem. It is the exception when the master mind and noble soul are found in modest rags. The gem may be there, enjoying the comforting knowledge of its own existence, but lost to the world; unless, by chance or purpose, it is dug out and clothed in the polish of advanced civilization. By a subconscious knowledge of human nature, Varena Farnam had discovered a pearl, and, with a little unselfishness, she had taken it from its clumsy shell and placed it in a frame where its beauty would be appreciated. She was so occupied in watching Mary in her bashfulness, and enjoying the impression that she was making on the students, that she was wholly unconscious of the sensation that her own appearance had produced, and happily ignorant of the malevolent glances of another aspirant for popularity.

Temperament was in evidence. In the flashing eyes and imperial brow of Eleanor Harding, an irascible, choleric temperament indicated unexplored regions of adventures and dangers dear to the student's heart. The ardent, sanguine temperament of Varena Farnam held not such dazzling temptations, but being the sister of two popular boys, made the scales balance evenly; and opinion was divided as to which should rank highest. Should the brunette or blonde beauty be the *dulcinea* for whom the prizes should be won—the goal attained?

As months passed and the humanities were assiduously conned, religious duties and social functions enjoyed, the students of both seminary and college slowly awoke to the fact that they were disappointed in the two stars that had promised a season of ex-

citement. Instead of igneous meteors, they were simply luminous. Their brilliancy caused no conflagration of rivalry; for each shone in a different sphere. Eleanor cared very little for the girls, and the boys held only a small place in Varena's thoughts. Consequently their attitude toward each other was cordial, and continued so throughout the first year.

They often went to the parlor together to meet the brothers, when they called on the regular reception evenings. Horace Runyan, calling on his sister at the same time, brought the six into very cordial acquaintance. Varena was unaware of a scheme between Sarah and Ralph, to bring Russell under the infatuating influence of Eleanor's charms. She had been a little annoyed at their forcing a private tête-à-tête on them occasionally; but, as Eleanor did not acquiesce with interest, she passed the matter over lightly, and unselfishly lent herself to the task of entertaining and developing Horace.

The students that remained in Danboro during the spring vacation clubbed together and entertained themselves with a fancy dress party. The parlors and dining-hall of the seminary were fantastically decorated, and many designs out of the ordinary were developed. With some secrecy, the various costumes were conjured; and, on the eventful night there appeared nymphs, oreads, ghosts, gods and goddesses. Well-known characters, from Shakespeare to Uncle Tom, were personated. Sarah Runyan dressed as a Japanese princess and her roommate as blind Nidia with a basket of flowers. Eleanor Harding represented the Queen of Sheba. Her gown was of filmy white, the whole figure draped in a gorgeous robe embroidered in gold; on her head was a crown of pearls, and she carried gifts of perfume and spices. Her rival in picturesque interest was Mary Baker, whom Varena had made most exquisite as

Aphrodite. They had transformed a divan into a large sea shell, and, cuddling down in her soft, fluffy gown, under a halo of her own natural modesty, Mary was ravishingly bewitching. In valuation of the adage, "Beauty unadorned, adorned the most," Varena appeared in the quaint, prim costume of Priscilla. Through the scheming of Sarah and Ralph, the girls were supplemented by Russell coming as King Solomon, Horace Runyan as John Alden, and Ralph himself as Jupiter. The professor of music, assisting the chaperon of the evening, came as Miles Standish. Ambitious to sustain their parts creditably, they had studied the characters, hunted up legends, committed poetry, and prepared special music.

"Am I all right?" said Horace Runyan, aside to his sister.

"Of course you are, if you will hide your self-consciousness," she answered.

"I feel so stiff," said the boy.

"You don't look it. Forget yourself and go in for a jolly good time. Russell and Eleanor make a royal pair, don't they?" commented Sarah.

"What made the music-teacher dress as Miles Standish? He'll be wanting to talk to Priscilla," Horace fretted.

"If Professor doesn't lose his heart to Mary Baker to-night, he never will," said Varena, coming near. "Isn't she lovely?"

"I hope he will," Sarah replied. "Horace is worrying for fear he'll monopolize you, and John Alden will be neglected."

"But Priscilla preferred John Alden," said Varena, smiling.

"Come then, Priscilla, and sing him a song, please," urged Horace, blushing.

"If you wish a thing to be well done, you must do it yourself, John," Varena quoted.

"I can't sing," replied Horace, embarrassed.

"Why don't you reply, 'modest and sweet, the very type of Priscilla,'" laughed Sarah.

"You know I can't quote poetry, Sister," the bashful boy answered.

"Never mind, Horace. The people are having too good a time to listen to me sing," Varena suggested.

"Just an old folk-song," urged Horace, not knowing what more to say.

"You don't know a folk-song from any other," teased his sister.

"A folk-song is a pretty melody that most any one can sing, with a few common chords that any one can play," returned Horace.

"Prove it," laughed Sarah. "Give us an illustration."

The boy turned to the piano, and, striking some strong chords, sang: "'We won't go home till morning,'" his rich bass voice filling the room resonantly.

"I'm proud of you, boy. That melody was sung before the first crusade to the Holy Land. To-day, it's sung in England to the words, 'He's a Jolly Good Fellow,'" said Sarah.

"We'll practise the American version to-night," laughed Ralph.

"Classic music," said the Professor, leaving the divan where Aphrodite was ensconced, and, joining the group at the piano, "embraces folk-song and vastly more. That little melody is in Beethoven's 'battle of Vittorai.' I am very fond of classic music."

"We can't rightly appreciate classic music until the faculties of the mind and ear have been trained to grasp the musical idea," observed Russell.

"We enjoy folk-song with the first sound of grandmother's voice," said Varena, smiling.

"But everybody, surely, can enjoy the marvellous

productions of a virtuoso like Rubenstein?" Sarah Runyan stated.

"But the degree of enjoyment is measured by previous cultivation and familiarity," insisted Russell.

"The value of a piece of music is evinced by its permanence," asserted Professor Clayton.

"Then that old piece 'The Shepherd Boy' is valuable. No one ever tires of hearing it," Varena suggested. "Play it, Russell, please."

"Grieg wrote one 'Shepherd Boy' and MacDowell another," began the music-teacher.

"But this old one is the sweetest of all," Varena insisted, "and it isn't classic. Is it?"

"I'm burdened with too much royalty. King Solomon never played a musical instrument regaled in this style of dress," Russell announced.

"Let me hold your robe, please," suggested Eleanor Harding, coming forward.

When Russell took the seat before the piano Professor Clayton turned to seek Mary Baker, and scowled at Ralph, who was bringing the blushes to her cheeks by his pretty compliments. Soon, the peculiar magnetism of the young man's music thrilled the listeners; and, when the last little trill and run was lost in the distance, the joy and tender ecstasy of the shepherd's soul throbbed in their hearts.

"How can an ignorant fellow like me decide between classic and common music?" Horace asked. "Now, I like that kind of music, and you said it wasn't classic."

"Don't confound folk-song with common music," said Eleanor Harding. "Common music includes popular sentimental pieces that are worn out in one season and forgotten the next."

"Folk-song has existed since 'the morning stars sang together at the dawn of creation,'" Varena added.

"Classic music contains many folk-songs," began

Professor Clayton. "Bach, in his 'St. Matthew's Passion,' took the love song of Hassler, 'My Spirit Is Distracted,' and enriched it with noble counterpoint."

"Didn't we sing it in church last Sunday?" asked Eleanor. "'O Sacred Head Now Wounded.' That is Bach, isn't it?"

The Professor assented, adding: "And Beethoven has a folk-song in his 'Seventh Symphony.' Antonin Dvorak has carried Bohemian music over the world. Liszt has taken the songs of the Gypsies and given them in his 'Rhapsodies' in the highest, most difficult form. Brahms has enriched Hungarian folk-song with exquisite harmony. Mendelssohn in his 'Scotch Symphony,' in the lilting scherzo, has created a Scottish theme that is a joy to every Scotchman; for it is thoroughly Gaellic in spirit. And Mozart in his 'Magic Flute'——" He stopped, embarrassed; for his audience had decreased until only the sea-shell, with its listening occupant, remained. Smiling down on Aphrodite, he added: "Floated away; could the wave start your bark, would you, too, leave me?"

"Indeed, I was deeply interested in all you were saying," said Mary, blushing. "I was going to ask you if there's any American classic?"

"The nation is too young yet," answered Professor Clayton. "Some day, Foster's 'Old Kentucky Home,' and Bullard's 'Stein Song,' and several of Nevin's pieces, dressed by the artist, may become classic."

"Were you talking about 'Old Kentucky Home,' Professor?" asked Ralph, bringing a crowd back to the parlor. "Call Russell, and let's all sing before supper is ready."

Russell sat down at the piano and filled the room with a volume of improvised variations; while the

company, indoors and out, sang the beloved old song with enthusiasm.

Supper being announced, the little cliques and coteries that were grouped in different parts of the room separated and formed into couples to march to the dining-hall. As Varena turned to her partner, she suffered with a hurting in her heart and a choking in her throat. She was not envious because Russell, as King Solomon, and Eleanor, as Queen of Sheba, led the procession; but hurt, humiliated, on discovering that she was a marionette in the hands of her friends. It was clear, now, that Ralph assisted by his coadjutor, had planned to give her to Horace as John Alden, and Eleanor to Russell, with the ultimate end of a consummated *affaire d'amour*. It was some time before she could bring herself to be courteous to the two partners assigned to her.

Ralph carried off Mary Baker to sit at the table near his brother and Eleanor.

Professor Clayton endeavored to contest the right of John Alden to Priscilla. Placing her chair between them, he playfully quoted: "'Any woman in England might be happy and proud to be called the wife of Miles Standish.'"

With an effort at cheerfulness, Varena replied: "'Surely, a woman's affection is not a thing to be asked for and had for only the asking.'"

"When it comes to quoting poetry, I'm not in it," said Horace. "The poetry of living is a good square meal, as this is going to be," and he assiduously served their plates with every article within his reach.

"If you will visit the boys at Finden, Grandmother will treat you to the 'poetry of living,' as you call good things to eat," Varena suggested.

"I vouch for that," Professor Clayton added.

"When were you there?" asked Horace.

"Last summer, in the interest of the school," answered the Professor, indifferently. He was intently watching Ralph and Mary Baker.

Following his gaze, Varena smiled significantly and quoted: "'When one is truly in love, he not only says it but shows it.'"

Professor Clayton dropped his eyes to his plate and blushed crimson.

Varena continued:

"'There are moments in life when the heart is so
full of emotion,
That if by chance it be broken, or into its depths
like a pebble
Drops some careless word, it overflows and its secret,
Spilt on the ground like water, can never be gathered
together.'"

Lifting his empty glass to call the attention of the servant, Horace quoted: "'Water, water everywhere, and not a drop to drink.' But that's not from 'Miles Standish,' is it? 'Life is real, life is earnest,' that's Longfellow, anyway.

The three laughed heartily, and the tension, which had been strained, was relieved, and a sympathetic understanding formed between Varena and her teacher. By mutual consent, Mary Baker became the subject of conversation during the remainder of the meal, until Professor Clayton abruptly asked:

"Why is it, Miss Varena, that you are so wholly indifferent to the young men? We rarely find a pupil of your age and attraction who is not ambitious and proud of the admiration of the college students."

"Indeed, I should feel gratified to know that I was appreciated by the boys. Further than that, I do not care; for my brother and I are going to travel,

to study, and see the world together. It is the deepest desire of my soul. I hope no alien influence will come to mar our future. I have visions of a life full of blessedness and peace. When, where, how? I can not penetrate the maze."

"Does your brother entertain the same views about your future?" the Professor inquired kindly.

"I'm sure he feels as I do, though we do not talk about it," said Varena, softly.

"You are young, my little girl." The Professor looked into her serious eyes. "When the right one storms the citadel, you will forget all about your brother and your travels. It may be better for your peace of mind to force yourself to think that he, too, may have all his plans changed by some dark beauty. You may be mistaken in your mission. You have the charming characteristics of the home-maker, the loveliness of the wife and mother. Listen to the advice of your friend and come down from your celestial air-castles."

Smiling, but serious, Varena replied with another quotation from "Miles Standish."

" 'This is not right, is not just, is not true to the
best that is in you;
For I know and esteem you, and feel that your na-
ture is noble,
Lifting mine up to a higher, a more ethereal level.
Therefore I value your friendship, and feel it per-
haps and more keenly
If you say aught that implies I am only as one
among many,
If you make use of those common and complimentary
phrases
Most men think so fine, in dealing and speaking
with women,
But which women reject as insipid, if not as insult-
ing.' "

"The last line is too strong, Professor, and only partially applicable to you. Indeed, I appreciate your advice; but you do not understand."

Seated between Russell and Ralph Farnam, with Mary Baker and Sarah Runyan and her partner *vis-a-vis*, Eleanor Harding was in the seventh heaven of delight. Her equivocal relations with the brothers added zest and poignancy to the situation. Russell was polite and serious; Ralph, attentive and enigmatical; Mary interested, and Sarah enthusiastic; and, altogether, they hung on her words and looks for entertainment and pleasure. The atmosphere was pregnant with fellow feeling; sentiment, contagious; propinquity, dangerous. The subjects of conversation were diversified, but always drifted back to music, because that was the theme most pleasing to Russell.

"That was a pretty thought of Sister's," said Ralph, "that 'music originated when 'the star's sang together at the dawn of creation'.' "

"It was re-echoed through the spheres, and caught by the elements of earth. The birds took it up, and the winds formed aeolian harps among the trees," said Eleanor.

"The katydid's and bumblebees learned the tune and the frogs croaked their bass solos," Ralph added.

"The brooks caught the magic of the melody as they kissed the pretty pebbles along the bank," continued Eleanor.

"Music is the offspring of love," Russell retorted. Eleanor blushed, and Ralph pressed her hand under the table.

"Written music," Russell resumed "originated in the desire to preserve the melody of the hymns that were sung by the early Christians. In the union of the soul with the Christ, the song of thanksgiving was begotten in the heart."

"But there was an effort made to copy and preserve it before the Christian era. Wasn't there?" Sarah asked.

"Perhaps," assented Russell; "though there's no record made of Deborah and Barak's 'Song of Triumph,' or Miriam's 'Rejoicing over the Destruction of Pharaoh and His Host,' or the 'Funeral Dirge Over the Death of Samson,' or the 'Requim for Saul and Jonathan.' Music seems to be co-existent with the Creator."

"You're familiar with musical history," said Sarah. "But I don't think we're indebted to sacred love for all our good music. The divinity enthroned in the heart of the composer, inspired many a masterpiece. If Professor Clayton doesn't produce a new song, after hovering over the goddess of love to-night, he lacks the soul of the artist."

Mary Baker blushed, and Ralph added: "One has to be both poet and musician to do justice to Aphrodite."

"The Greeks have a mythological origin for music," said Mary. "The legend tells of the god, Pan, loving a nymph, who fled from his ardent demonstrations; and, being stopped by a stream of water, she prayed to be transformed into the reeds that grow along the bank. Pan, pursuing, caught the reed in his arms, and, breathing on them in his embrace, they gave forth plaintive tones, and music has ever since been associated with Pan's pipes."

"Hereafter," said Ralph, "when I'm hungry for music, I'll follow the example set by the little god of shepherds. Perhaps he's the boy of your piece, Russ."

"I've heard the 'wisdom of Solomon' and the mythology of the Greeks; but 'the half has not been told,' " said the Queen of Sheba, smiling; "for the Japanese Princess has yet to account for the queer music in the land of the Mikado."

"They have a legend that makes a deity the author of music," began Sarah. "Amaterasu Ohongami was a beautiful creature, who, one morning, issued from the eye of her father, Izanagi, while he was bathing in the sea. She was the most beautiful being living; but, one day, some young gods twitted her because she had wrapped garlands of seaweed about her lovely body, and she shut herself up in a gloomy cavern. Eight million gods——"

"No; nine million," interrupted Ralph.

"Eight million," continued Sarah. "Just eight million gods and goddesses implored the beautiful creature to come out. She resisted every appeal until Futadama and Udsume——"

"Who?" Ralph interrupted, laughingly.

"Udsume and Futadama," repeated Sarah, "hit on a novel scheme. One built a huge mirror and placed it before the cave. The other bent to the ground the branches of a tree, and strung thongs of seaweed from limb to trunk. From these, he plucked strange sounds such as had never been heard before. The lovely Amaterasu came in wonderment to the mouth of the cave to hear more clearly the marvellous sounds; but, when she saw her own image in the mirror, she flew into a passion of rage, that any one should be as beautiful as she, and ran out of the cavern. The successful gods rolled huge boulders to the mouth of the cave and pacified the angry beauty by teaching her to pluck the thongs of the new harp."

"We have almost finished our supper during your narrative," said Mary Baker.

"One of you should entertain me now for a few minutes," Sarah replied.

"An interesting characteristic of the peculiar music of the Japanese is the manner in which they convey to each other the actualities of life," began Russell. "It is not based upon the combination of

sounds, but upon the relative positions of symbols and signs as they appear in the notation of music. It is an intricate study. Americans are as unable to grasp it as Japanese are loath to learn from us. I have studied the subject, thinking I may some day be in a position to try to teach music to the natives."

"Don't wait for me," said Sarah. "The others have finished and are getting ready for the games. Here comes Professor Clayton. I'll excuse you, Mary; but I must finish my cream and cake."

"Priscilla prefers John Alden, and I have come to find a partner for the promenade, Miss Mary," said the Professor, offering his arm to Mary.

"Excuse me?" she asked of Ralph, and, with quickening pulse, accompanied her friend to the veranda, where the music was in full blast.

"I'm sorry Professor Clayton has put you off on me, Miss Varena; for I'm poor company," said Horace.

"I asked him to go where his inclinations were drawing," Varena replied, "and if you desire, I'll excuse you."

"No, no," stammered Horace. "The fact of the business is, I feel so uncomfortable in these prim clothes and slippers that I can't act decent. If Sister had let me wear my baseball suit, or played Buffalo Bill, I would have been in my natural element."

"You are as interesting as any one," encouraged Varena. "A good listener is more desirable than a tame talker, or even a good conversationalist who monopolizes."

"Well, I can listen," said Horace, relieved that he was not considered wholly a failure.

The grounds were lighted with Japanese lanterns, and in cozy corners on the veranda were tables for games. The moon was sufficiently bright to permit of the more active sports of quoits and croquet. Horace and Varena won several games and resigned

their mallets to others, as Professor Clayton and Mary Baker approached them.

"What have you done with Venus, Aphrodite?" asked Varena.

"He has forsaken me for a princess," was the reply.

"And Venus has stooped to console a poor mortal," added Professor Clayton.

"We haven't seen Solomon and his queen since we came outside," said Horace. "Nor Sister and Ralph; the four are always together."

"I'd like to find them," said Varena, succinctly.

"Shall we help you?" the Professor asked.

"Thank you. We might make the promenade entirely around the building, you going one way and we the other," Varena suggested.

"And trill when they're found," added Mary.

They separated and followed the walks in and out through the shrubbery and around the grounds, each listening in vain for the other to trill.

"'This is the crisis of his fate.' If she does not make an impression to-night, we may as well give it up," said Ralph to Sarah.

"I've thrown them together under the most favorable allurements; but there is no affinity. She is not his type," Sarah replied.

"You're the best coadjutor I could have had. And it beats me," said Ralph. "She's beautiful."

"Yes," assented Sarah.

"She's smart," Ralph continued.

"Yes," agreed Sarah.

"She's an excellent musician and a sweet singer," added Ralph.

"His ears are full of wax. She is not the siren whose songs he hears," Sarah announced.

"Seems to me that she has all the qualifications that a man like Russ would demand," urged Ralph.

"He disapproves of a coquette," began Sarah.

"Not the kind she is," Ralph interrupted. "She makes men adore her and keeps them at arm's length. That ought to satisfy Russ. He has a notion that if a girl lets one boy kiss her, she will let a dozen. I don't agree with him. Anyway, there is no harm in a friendly kiss when a little mouth is bewitchingly sweet and convenient. Better than strawberries and cream."

Sarah laughed. She was an old girl, who had been the confidant of several brothers and their chums, and knew human nature in its purity and also in its waywardness. She had known Ralph and Russell for four years, and had helped Ralph in many little ways, rescuing him from several indiscretions.

"I have made a mistake in my diagnosis if Eleanor is in love with Russell; because those apparently hard, cold girls, who enjoy making others suffer, have the least control over themselves when under the influence of the *grande passion*. Has it occurred to you that we might make Russell the victim of an unreciprocated attachment?" Sarah asked.

"She cares for him. I know she does," Ralph declared. "She follows me around to get to talk about him. Why, I've seen her eyes sparkle and her cheeks flush when I was telling some interesting things about our home, our dog, and Grandmother. She slips notes to me, and asks me to meet her so she can talk about Flash and Russell. She thinks Flash is Russell's dog."

"I think you are mistaken. I believe Mary Baker would please Russell better. Why do you persist that it must be Eleanor?" argued Sarah.

"You don't know Russ, Miss Sarah. He's deep and slow; besides, I like Eleanor tremendously and want her for a sister-in-law. Then I'd get to kiss her. It would be jolly good fun to tease her till

those black eyes flashed fire, and then to kiss her into good humor," Ralph laughed ardently.

"Why don't you marry her yourself?" demanded Sarah.

"Me!" He smiled confusedly. "She would marry me about as soon as you would."

"If I were as young as she is, and you were as devoted to me as you are to her, I should not find it difficult to consider such a contingency favorably. You are handsomer than your brother; you are as good in your studies, though not so thorough a musician. Still, you are as fine a specimen of the Kentucky gentleman."

"*Donner und blitzen!* but I feel complimented to hear all that from a woman who is chary of pretty speeches."

"But you have one serious fault," added Sarah.

"Now, you spoil it all. What is it?"

"You are too much of a 'lady's man.' You will always be a little bit in love with every pretty woman, consciously or unconsciously 'playing with the affections of chaste femininity,'" averred Sarah.

"Thank you. Shall we follow the royal couple?"

"We promised to come at once. They doubtless think we've forgotten them. How far is it?"

"Not far across; but we must go around under the hill, or the crowd will see us and maybe follow us," stated Ralph.

"I know it was more from habit than any preconceived plan that made Russell suggest visiting his big tree. We have not been fair in tarrying so long," said Sarah.

They skirted the grove and walked up by the stream of water, keeping close under the bank until they could see Russell and Eleanor.

Russell had spread his royal robe on the ground for a throne for Eleanor, and, with two long sticks they called sceptres, they murdered pebbles by flip-

ping them into the waters, and reviewed historical incidents of cruel sovereigns and rebellious subjects. When Eleanor caught sight of the delinquents, she ran to meet them.

With flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes, she cried: "I thought you would never get here. Where have you been?"

Very seriously, Sarah replied: "Ralph has been proposing to me. Under those circumstances you could not expect me to hurry."

"I don't believe it," Eleanor asserted impulsively. Then seeing Ralph's embarrassment, she drew herself up haughtily and asked: "Is it true?"

"You're not very cordial in your congratulations," interposed Sarah, enjoying the situation immensely. "The truth is, he did not think I would be willing to marry him, and I told him that, barring certain conditions, I would."

With a bitter, insulting tone, Eleanor began: "You are——"

Sarah wisely interrupted: "We were just wishing that matters were progressing with another couple. Ralph says the next thing he most desires, is to have you for a sister-in-law."

The surprise in Eleanor's face was no revelation to Sarah, though Ralph was bewildered. Eleanor essayed to speak, caught her breath, compressed her lips, and stood a moment defiant.

"Everything is perfectly lovely with us; but we're not going to have it talked about by the whole school," she said, and, leaving them, she ran back to her place by the side of Russell, who seemed absorbed in counting the pebbles in the brook.

"What did you mean, Miss Sarah?" asked Ralph.

"To open your eyes," replied Sarah. "Sit down a minute. The joke is too good to be true."

"I don't see the joke. She says it is all right with her and Russ," Ralph grumbled.

"Aren't you glad?" said Sarah, gurgling with suppressed merriment.

"What's the matter with you?" insisted Ralph.

"Aren't you glad? Answer," Sarah persisted.

"Blamed if I am. Russ is too cold-hearted to appreciate her," acknowledged Ralph.

"Why didn't you think of that sooner?" asked Sarah, laughing.

"Why were you so slow in deciding that Russell couldn't appreciate Eleanor? I suggested giving him Mary Baker," continued Sarah.

"You're to blame. Yes, you are to blame!" Ralph stared at his companion.

"Me? Well! Sit down a minute and let us reason it out. They are having a cozy time. See how she cuddles over him," continued Sarah, mischievously.

"If you don't stop laughing I'll be tempted to do something desperate. What did you mean by making her think we were engaged? You know you wouldn't marry me." Ralph threw himself on the ground and covered his chagrin by pitching stones into the river. "You wouldn't be bothered with me or any other 'lady's man.'"

"I didn't really prevaricate, you know. I just twisted our conversation around a little and used it to surprise her secret," Sarah defended, smiling.

"That wasn't necessary; for Russ will tell me," Ralph objected.

"Poor Russell; he will remain in ignorance while I see I must enlighten you, unsophisticated boy that you are." Again Sarah choked down her mirth; for she knew Eleanor was watching them.

"Proceed," urged Ralph, "and be serious for ten minutes."

"Didn't you notice how hurt and then how angry she was?"

"No. I was so surprised at what you said that I didn't notice anything," acknowledged Ralph.

"In all seriousness, Ralph, when Eleanor concluded that you were committed to me, she determined, in an instant, that I should think that she had won Russell. And she will now try to win him, though she has never tried before. If you really wish her to succeed, leave her unenlightened as to the true situation with us. If you don't want to give her Russell, go marry her yourself. You can do it," Sarah concluded.

Ralph kept on throwing stones into the river.

"Think it over seriously and don't act hastily," advised Sarah.

"It might be a good plan to leave it as it is now, until the end of this year, anyway. I will stifle this fool hurting in my inwards and watch developments. Shall we?" and he extended his hand to assist her to her feet.

"You will not be annoyed if she lets it get out that your fiancée is that old Sarah Runyan?" Sarah asked, seriously.

"No affectation of modesty, dear old girl. You know there's not a man in Danboro that wouldn't be proud of the honor," asserted Ralph.

"If you were not among the wealthy yourself, you might get the appellation 'fortune-hunter,'" said Sarah, laughing.

"You're worth more than your money, Miss Sarah; for you're the best friend a fellow ever had. And if you're willing, we will have quite a bit of fun before June. And—well, you're the only girl I'd be engaged to and not——" Ralph hesitated.

"Kiss her," finished Sarah. "I'll kiss you when you're married. And, by the way, I must take Horace into our secret and prevent his writing home. They sent me here to look after him; it would be

ridiculous to reverse matters and have him taking care of me."

Russell rose to greet them and offered his seat on the robe beside Eleanor to Sarah, and instinctively glanced up at the seminary. He pulled a little white handkerchief from his pocket and stealthily waved at a figure on the balcony, embarrassed by an unexplainable consciousness of concealment.

Ralph attributed his confusion to the interruption of their tête-a-tête, and suggested returning to the seminary. Russell threw the robe over his shoulder and would have walked with Sarah; but Eleanor haughtily intercepted and marched him ahead with her; the others quietly followed.

They were not the only ones who had strayed beyond the limits during the evening; so their absence and advent attracted little comment.

Throughout the remainder of the year, Eleanor continued her devotion to Russell in an artful, clever manner. She decided to do some extra work in Latin, and joined a class of three whom Russell was tutoring. This gave her frequent occasions for quiet study and conversation with her conscientious, matter-of-fact teacher. At the same time she had ample opportunities to cultivate friends among the students, and securing for herself the honor of being the most popular girl in school. Ralph, she regarded with disfavor and Sarah Runyan with the utmost contempt. Yet she was not happy.

Eleanor Harding had, by inheritance, two distinct natures, which were constantly at war in her soul. An ambition to be transcendently beautiful, inexpressibly gifted, and unapproachably admired, contended with a desire for aloneness or solitariness, with one deep abiding love. A will that was law, to which everything must give way, was offset with a longing for a master will to subdue her own. With

ability to conquer was strength to endure; with a knowledge of power was a feeling of abandon. She studied Russell Farnam more earnestly than she conned her Latin verbs. On leaving the recitation-room after an hour of work in which she had put all her energy into a final effort to awaken some sympathetic interest, she looked into his dangerous brown eyes, her own dancing with excitement, and said:

"This is our last lesson."

"We may work together next year," he replied.

"That depends." She moved closer to him and took up their Latin reader, and, turning the leaves thoughtfully, waited. They were alone in the twilight room. Half an hour later, she left the recitation-room with a lighter heart. She had shared her burden with a friend.

Sarah Runyan was enjoying her part in the little comedy. She independently laughed at the friends who were mystified or disgusted with the rôle she was playing, as the sweetheart of a boy seven or eight years her junior, and exerted her influence to stimulate Ralph to earnest work and higher achievements, and encouraged him in patiently waiting the consummation of the year's association. She knew his heart was aching under the imaginary happiness of his brother, but rejoiced in the fact that it was making a better man of him. He no longer wasted time in idle flirtations, or neglected his studies to pen poems to violet eyes and raven locks. He was applying himself to his books and energetically entering into the fraternity contests. Apathy and indifference gave place to a desire to excel in every branch. "Take life as it comes and enjoy it as it is," was no longer his motto. His lugubrious countenance amused Sarah; for she knew beneath it was the firm resolve to accomplish nobler achievements. A beautiful love, requited or unrequited, is refining and elevating to the soul of one in whom the foundation of true charac-

ter is begotten. The nature in which an hereditary proclivity to seek the lower or evil course is the one that succumbs to a disappointment in love; and similar results would follow commercial or political failures. The young man who threatens to throw his life away in drink or recklessness has not the manhood in which a woman may safely trust her happiness.

When at the close of the year Ralph held the honors of his class, had won the fraternity contest and received the medal in elocution, there were no two people more proud than his brother and Eleanor Harding. But Sarah Runyan had the satisfaction of believing that she was instrumental in directing him into paths of success that crowned him with glory.

CHAPTER XII.

DEVELOPMENTS.

Finden, the old Kentucky home, was alive with joy and activity. The June roses were blooming in abundance, the violets were waving their little heads in profusion from the front gate to the brook at the foot of the hill, the burning bush was aflame with blossoms, the lilacs were making a sad effort to hold their fragrance longer, the snowballs were whitening in the sun, and the bees were humming a tune of plenty. The cows were lowing a requiem for offspring gone to market. The lawn and meadow, sparkling with fireflies, vied with the starry heavens.

Mrs. Falconer, coming home from the village at twilight, stopped at the end of the grape-arbor, wondering what all the commotion was about. Throughout the yard were children and negroes catching the little lightning-bugs. From the veranda came peals of laughter, then sudden quiet, then another burst of merriment. Leaving Jim to attend to the horse and buggy and Jennie to care for the purchases she had brought from the village, she came slowly up the walk.

"O Grandmother, come and see our pet toad," cried Varena.

"Your what?" Mrs. Falconer asked.

Clara Pryor and Florence Lindley had come over to call on Varena and her guest, Mary Baker. They, with Russell and Ralph, were all standing watching a large toad that had come up on the veranda. Va-

rena had seen it suck a firefly into its mouth over a space of two or three inches. From this followed the sport of catching the bugs and guessing on the distance from which the toad could secure his victim. After a number of fireflies had been devoured, they were amazed to what extended proportions the toad had swollen, and also at the clearness with which they could distinguish his skeleton when the flies lightened inside him. They seemed to fill a cavity from the crown of his head to the joints of his knees.

"He must have swallowed fifty or a hundred flies," said Ralph.

"Isn't it funny! He draws them by suction, don't you think, Grandmother?" Varena asked.

"Let's not feed him any more. He may burst," Mary Baker suggested.

"Now, if he can manage to digest one fly a day, he can go and creep into some rock and pose as the philosopher's toad, and live six months or more," said Varena.

They called it Miss Mary's toad. The next evening, it came back, lank and hungry, and the young people fed him. In fact, it came to be the regular sport to sacrifice the brilliant fireflies at the shrine of the homely toad, until Grandmother became annoyed with the heathenish rite and requested them to desist. Then, the hungry creature hopped the full length of the veranda and into the house, and continued to come for several days. Varena said he was hunting for Mary Baker and advised her to ship him to the zoological gardens.

The two friends spent a delightful summer. Free from care and unrestrained by conventionalities, they roamed over the old farm, enjoying every feature of its rural beauty. Little excursions were made to visit the scenes of juvenile games and youthful experiences. A lunch was eaten on the high hill, and the big tree, from which Varena had ingloriously fallen,

was examined critically. The underbrush had all been cleared off from the hillside where Ralph had leaped into the heavens to escape the serpent; but the old limb that had scattered the girl and the berries over the ground still hung across the path. A flock of sheep ranged over the pasture, questioning the intruders with mild, wistful eyes; but no daring leader approached them. It was in the old Peace Palace tree, in the grove near the house, that the friends often climbed and sat for hours, reading and exchanging confidences.

"This is such a restful, happy summer," said Mary, closing her book and adjusting herself to a more comfortable position in the old tree. "No wonder you are such lovely people reared on a farm like this. It makes me tired to think of going back to the glitter and pomp and bustle of the city."

"It's just Grandmother. It is so lovely to come back to her in the same old house and furniture, the flowers, the bees, the trees, all just as we left them. I shall be eighteen next June, and I'm as happy sitting in this old tree, swinging my feet, as I was years ago when Ralph said 'I wouldn't play fair.' I'll tell you a secret, Mary. There's a great mystery connected with this tree and the earth beneath it. And I have a presentiment that it in some way affects my life."

"I'm afraid of mysteries and secrets. In story-books, they are always associated with things uncanny and terrible," Mary replied.

"This is not a story. It's a real, sure enough happenstance," whispered Varena, ghostily.

"*Happenstance* is not in the dictionary," laughed Mary.

"That is what I mean, anyway—a strange circumstance that *happened* years ago. Often, my imagination reaches out into the unknown, and I try to fathom the future; and, always, this mystery

spreads out before me like an immense enigma of people, places, and things, and I feel that I shall some day be able to solve it," continued Varena.

"Professor Clayton says you're too visionary," said Mary. "We shall have a practical problem to solve at school the first of the year."

"What is it?"

"Our class president. There are fourteen of us, provided no new girls come in, which is not probable; and the fight for the office will be over you and Eleanor Harding."

"There shall be no fight as far as I am concerned. Let Eleanor have it. She'll make a good president."

"We knew that was the way you would regard the situation; so you weren't invited to attend the caucus we held before school closed. Your friends are determined to have you, and you really owe something to them. Eleanor has been very overbearing and distant to most of the class, until the last few weeks."

"I don't think she means to be supercilious. She is naturally proud and reserved," explained Varena.

"Why should she begin cultivating the girls just at the close of the year?" Mary asked.

"For some reason she grew weary of the boys and naturally turned to the girls. If she aspires to the honor of president of our class I shall vote for her," insisted Varena.

"It will be closely contested. We counted on Katie Benedict; but, since she began rooming with Eleanor, she's gone over to her side."

"Katie has a better opinion of her roommate than Sarah had, then?" Varena asked. "Katie lives in Milwaukee, doesn't she?"

"Yes; we came back together after the holidays. She is perfectly bewitched with her roommate; she talks about her continually. She feels a sympathy for

her that she would not dare manifest to the girl herself."

"I'm not surprised. Eleanor is an unapproachable girl," said Varena, indifferently.

Mary continued: "Katie says, Eleanor's character is a combination of two distinct personalities; that while she appears proud, she is simply trying to be reserved; haughty, she is praying to be gentle; arrogant, she wishes she were affable; disdainful, she is longing to be unassuming; irritable, she is pleading for patience; selfish, she admires utilitarianism; vain, she covets modesty; strong, yet she knows herself weak."

"I'm sorry for her," said Varena. "I wish she could have my grandmother; then her better nature would predominate."

"Your grandmother is lovely, and so good to me. Think of her making me a present of my graduating dress! I'm going to wear it on a much more important occasion," Mary confessed, blushing.

"When? Have you a secret that you haven't told me?"

"I think you have guessed it," answered Mary, still blushing.

"I used to wish that you and Ralph would fancy each other; but I soon saw that Professor Clayton was your ideal. Ralph expects to go to Harlam, Tennessee, to be cashier in the bank next summer. That's the reason he's staying in the First National in the village this summer, just for the practise. Our father was the largest stockholder in the Harlam bank, and that will belong to Ralph and me. I don't know why Russell was not to have a share in the bank, unless he is to take the farm. But tell me about your wedding. When is it to be?"

"Some time in the summer, as soon as I can get ready after I leave school. We'll miss you the next

year at Danboro," said Mary, very happy in the contemplation of her future.

"I'm awfully glad for you. I know you'll be the dearest little wife, and have the coziest little home imaginable," gushed Varena.

"And do you know that I think I am very much indebted to you for it? Professor Clayton has always loved me; but he never found it out until this year. He said when he saw me that first Sunday at church, that his heart went all to pieces; then, the night that I represented Aphrodite, the matter was eternally settled."

"I hope you will always be happy," said Varena. There was wistful melancholy in her voice.

"You mustn't feel bad because I have concluded to go home. You have already done so much for me, I can never cease to thank you," added Mary.

"We don't want thanks; we are compensated in your happiness; but I shall be pretty lonely when you are gone, with Ralph in town all day, and Russell so very busy, for he has everything to superintend now," said Varena.

"There are so many things necessary for me to attend to at home this fall, that I may be ready to leave next year," explained Mary.

"I understand. Yonder comes Ralph; it must be after four o'clock. He has the letters, too," cried Varena.

"One for me, sure," and Mary smiled in anticipation of the letter that she might read accurately without breaking the seal.

It proved to be a letter in which Professor Clayton asked her to meet him in the city of Louiston the following Thursday as she was on her way home.

Russell was having a very vexatious time on the farm this summer. A large crop of tobacco had been raised and prepared for market; but a war

between the farmers and the trusts had sprung up so rapidly and was waged so bitterly that no disposition had been made of the produce when the boys returned from college; and, very much as it was during the time of the Civil War, houses were divided among themselves. Earnest and conscientious as to the right and wrong of the situation, Russell and Ralph took opposite sides of the question. One wished to ship the tobacco and sell it on the city market; the other was determined to hold, or pool it, until the trust was forced to give a reasonable price for it. There was no personal feeling between the boys, only a determination to outwit each other. Consequently, Russell planned to secure help and have the hogsheads hauled to the river some night while his brother was asleep. Ralph, equally secretive, had arranged with a party to get the tobacco, and store it with the Equity Company. Jack Lindley, the boy whom Russell had struck in the face for kissing his sister, resolved, without any accomplice, to burn the barn and its contents and enjoy the secret satisfaction of revenge, while the stigma would fall on one or the other of the contending tobacco organizations.

Twice Jack came in the night with his oil and matches, and, seeing a dim light in the barn, ran for his life, imagining a pistol shot in every twig that was broken by his scampering feet. In the third effort at incendiarism, he approached the barn from a different direction, and poured his oil over a bunch of hay and was in the act of striking a match, when, in the stillness of the night and magnified by his guilty imagination, a little sneeze sounded so like the explosion of a dynamite bomb that he dropped his oil can and matches, and made for the road. He ran into an old cow, stumbled over a nest of pigs, fell into a pond of water, and left a piece of his shirt on a wire fence.

A few nights later, while the brothers were watching each other, Ralph's men quietly drove their teams into the lot and began opening the big doors when a light suddenly flared up and they drove away rapidly. Ralph was very much provoked at their failure, attributing their scare to some will-o'-the-wisp.

The next night, Russell and his gang came rather boldly, for Ralph had been sent to the city on business for the bank. They drove the wagons up near the doors, and, as they opened them, Russell saw a glimmer of light, and was sure that some one was setting fire to the barn. He drew his pistol and rushed in. There was a tiny lamp burning on top of one of the hogsheads, an open book beside it, and Varena sound asleep. He caught her up in his arms and pressed her to his heart, and she laughed heartily, when she saw who held her.

"And so you are the guardian who has saved our barn from burning. Well, this ends it. Ralph and I will divide to-morrow. He may take his half and do as he pleases, and I will ship the other half. Grandmother's worries will end, and you can sleep in the house. You're a brave girl," said Russell. Turning to the men, he continued: "Sister rules to-night. Come back to-morrow afternoon, and I think we will haul my share away in daylight," and the trouble was ended for that season.

The autumn was crowding on to the summer. Nature was rapidly changing her dress, and Russell was rushed in an effort to fill the granaries and gather the fruit, so as to leave the place in a comfortable condition when they returned to school.

Coming in from his labors one afternoon, he found Varena asleep in the front yard. Near a rose bush on the rolling ground, where the grass was green and dry, she was lying with her head resting on a mound, and her fancy work lying on the ground

before her. The boys had purchased a kodak, intending it for their sister's birthday, and had been watching for an opportunity to snap her picture, without her knowledge; so that, when she sent her first batch to the photographer to be developed, she would be surprised to find herself among them. Russell came near, with an armful of beautifully tinted leaves, and finding Varena sound asleep stood looking at her, unmindful of the opportunity he had been coveting, until he heard Ralph whistling. He raised a silencing finger and together they decorated their sleeping sister with autumn leaves and roses. They then propped a mirror in front of her in such a position that she would see herself first when she awakened. The boys stood behind her and took one picture of her sleeping and one with the eyes wide open in pleased surprise. She rose laughing, saying:

"I knew you were decorating me. I could hear you breathe. But I could not imagine what you were doing so long when you fixed the mirror. And I didn't dare to peek because you were down before me."

The boys laughed, too; for they knew she had not seen the kodak. It disappeared suddenly, before she had grasped the whole situation.

A personal influence that may exert puissant control when present, gradually diminishes in power with intervening space. Individual magnetism, like electricity, makes only feeble indentures when too far removed. It was not necessary for Sarah Runyan to return to Danboro another year; for her brother had chosen his companions from trustworthy friends and was launched on his course in comparative safety; and Ralph Farnam was left without his confidante and monitor.

The university was scarcely in running order before a fever of excitement pervaded the different

departments over the election of the class president in the seminary. The students gave expression to a preference on the different sides in the fight, though the active participants were limited to the fourteen members of the senior class. The Farnam brothers were the most deeply interested and said the least about it, even avoiding each other when the matter was discussed. It had been the custom for a member of the faculty to preside at the first class meeting, when the officers were elected. There was no precedent in which a teacher had cast the deciding vote in case of a tie, and she refused to do so now. After the first meeting, in which Eleanor Harding and Varena Farnam had received seven votes each, the girls were advised to appoint another meeting, and, in the meantime, talk the matter over amicably. The advice was followed, and three different times they met and adjourned with the same result. The peculiar quality of the Kentucky atmosphere animated the girls with the resolve to elect the candidate of their choice or none at all. Varena's appeal to her friends to give up and put an end to the trouble only increased their love and admiration for her, and strengthened their determination to elect her at all hazards.

When Ralph came to his sister and asked her to withdraw in favor of Eleanor, she asked: "Does Russell wish me to?"

"I don't know; but I think not."

"I'm in the hands of my constituents, and shall be guided by them," she replied, smiling.

It was known that each nominee for office had voted for her opponent, and a remark had been made that the contest might be terminated by one voting for herself.

Mary Baker said to Katie Benedict: "Varena would be offended at the suggestion."

"They are all discussing it," laughed Katie. "But if each votes for herself, the tie remains."

"Varena Farnam would not do such a thing," Mary declared.

"I don't know whether Eleanor would or not. I hope not," said Katie, seriously.

Some urged one thing, some another; finally, a meeting was appointed. Advocates were chosen from both factions to plead the merits of the candidates. The girls were all excited, save Varena, who was indifferent to the result. Katie Benedict, who loved and admired her roommate and knew her good qualities better than any one knew them, now, nervously but quietly watched her, hoping that Eleanor's better nature would conquer, and she might be able to resist the temptation of accepting doubtful honors. As she sat looking across the room at the proud beauty, she remembered that in writing the names, Varena Farnam ran straight along the line, while Eleanor Harding went above and below the line. The tellers passed slips of paper. The pencils moved, and a loud-sounding sigh escaped Katie Benedict before her eyes dropped to her own paper and she wrote unhesitatingly. The tellers counted the votes and the chair announced—"A tie."

The tell tale crimson of Eleanor's cheek, the flash of her angry eye, indicated clearly that she knew one friend had forsaken her. Varena rose and tried to withdraw her name; but her voice was drowned in a bedlam of noise, and the meeting adjourned.

The faculty met to consider the situation and to devise some plan by which satisfactory results could be attained that would prevent the breach from widening and leaving a permanent feud in the school. Varena was sent for and readily agreed to withdraw in the interest of peace and harmony. The interview with Eleanor Harding was less satisfactory,

though she was persuaded to be content with holding the office for a term of half the year. A meeting was called. A motion to divide the year into a first and a second period was made and carried. When the nomination for president for the first term was called for, the Harding faction precipitately nominated Eleanor, who was unanimously elected. They had blundered into thinking that the election for the last and most important period would not take place until the expiration of the first term; but Varena was duly elected at once. In a short time, all parties were satisfied by the amicable adjustment of the class and were enthusiastically planning for the brilliant achievements of their regime; and the school enjoyed an unprecedented season of sparkling events. Each function was unique and more enjoyable than the last. Eleanor never wearied in her festivities. She seemed controlled by a proud, restless spirit that slept neither day or night.

The sombre clouds had overspread the sky. The cooling winds murmured through the trees, giving promise of a coming friend that would clothe their nakedness in garments soft and white, as a compensation for their unresisting submission when Jack Frost stole their dresses of green. The brown leaves flitted to and fro in restlessness, seeking a sheltered grove where they might sink into mother earth, that unannihilated protoplasm could be born again in newness of form in the spring's awaking. The veranda vines, swayed by the impulse of the wind, loosed their tendril clasps and fell in heaps on the ground, no longer obstructing the askance rays of the winter sun. Eleanor Harding looked out at the beautiful white snowflakes coquetting in every direction, and conceived the happy idea of a sleighing party for her last social function. It was a glorious scheme. Such heavy snowfalls were rare in Kentucky. A wagon-bed on a pair of old-fashioned

bob-sleds would hold the fourteen girls and the chap-eron and as many boys. They would have dinner in the mountains and return by moonlight. The scheme met with the approval of the class, and a committee called on the Principal to request permission to prepare for and execute the plan.

She shook her head, saying: "Saturday would be the only day that I could let you go. By then your beautiful snow will be all mud."

"And may we go if the snow lasts?" they asked.

"You may go if there is snow sufficient. Your President has had a happy success in all her work so far, and she must not grieve when once she is disappointed. It is too warm and the snow too light to last," continued the Principal.

Still, the snow kept on falling, all that day and the next; then it began to grow warm. At midnight some of the girls arose to look out at the snow. All nature was shrouded in white; it clung to the trees and bushes. But the pale moon made one dark shadow conspicuous. Eleanor held her breath in wonder. A shadow that, at first seemed stationary beneath her window, moved swiftly across the lawn and disappeared behind the shrubbery. She was intent on catching another glimpse of the object when Katie Benedict called to her, saying:

"You'll take cold out there in your gown. How is the snow? Melting?"

"It isn't cold. The snow is lovely, but it will not last. It is dropping from the trees now. O, I'm so sorry," sighed Eleanor.

Saturday morning found the girls all filled with regret that the winter picnic had to be abandoned.

"Melting snow and drizzling rain," said Mary Baker to Katie Benedict. "I'm more sorry on Eleanor's account than anything else. She will feel vexed over the failure of the scheme, even though it is nature's fault."

"She does not seem to care at all," replied Katie. "She's in better spirits than she's been this year. I mean she's in a different mood." They did not know that Eleanor's change of mood was caused by a change in her outlook on the things of life.

She had left one of her books in the college library the day before and it was returned to her by Horace Runyan. In it she found a card on which was written, in a well-known calligraphy, this little poem:

Starlight shines upon the snow,
Brightly so brightly,
Yet it wakes no genial glow
In the cold, unfeeling snow,
Sleeping so whitely.

Thus is falling now my love,
Lightly so lightly,
On a heart no power can move,
On a heart that treats my love
Lightly so lightly.

Eleanor, tell me, where the snow
Now sleeps so whitely,
Will not love flowers some time grow,
When my love shall melt the snow,
Kissing it lightly?

She read and re-read the poem with humid eyes. She recalled, with a new interpretation, many words and acts, and read in coy expressions things only hoped for before. She pressed the little card spasmodically to her heart. It was a key by which she could answer many questions, a rule by which she could solve many little incidents of the past few months.

Later Katie Benedict found her roommate dress-

ing for dinner with unusual care, and asked: "Are we to have guests to-day?"

"Not that I know of," Eleanor answered, smiling at herself in the mirror.

"Why are you dressing so handsomely? You haven't taken the trouble to do your hair in French waves since the last party," said Katie.

" 'I'm just a feelin' good,' " quoted Eleanor.

"There's somethin' in me, though as seems
Would burst out if it could.
I'm just a bubblin' over now
'Cause I'm a feelin' good.' "

"We supposed that you would be the most disappointed one of the crowd, when the snow melted," stated Katie, in surprise.

"I am very sorry that we didn't get to go. I hope the girls will not feel too bad. Everything else that we planned was a success. Sometimes, a little pleasure may compensate for the loss of a big lot of fun. Since the snow melted off the pansy bed, I found these blossoms. Aren't they pretty? Think of their blooming under the snow! Don't they look sweet on my black hair?" continued Eleanor. "You little darlings."

"You're a queer girl. Sounds like my little sister making love to her kitten," said Katie.

"There's the dinner bell. You'd better hurry," answered Eleanor, smiling radiantly.

"You have spent an hour beautifying your beautiful self, and a plain little body like me has to jump into her togs in five minutes," and Katie hastily changed her dress.

"You don't have to," averred Eleanor.

"The more you have, the more you want; the less you have, the less you care. Isn't that a wise saying? Write it down that it may be preserved for

generations to come," ended Katie, as they hastened to the dining-room.

Eleanor carefully preserved her pansies, and wore them in her hair next day, when she went to church. She treasured them as the emblem of the poem she had found in her book. At night, restless and unable to sleep, she sat by her window, conning the verses, watching the stars, and thinking of the shadow that had crossed the snow-covered lawn a few nights previous. The moon had not yet risen and the earth was dark and gloomy; but there was brightness in her thoughts and exultation in her heart. She believed that her window was the lodestone of the midnight wanderer, and again she felt the presence, but could not see anyone. She reached over to her dresser and took the bunch of pansies, fastened them together with a scrap of tin-foil, and stepped out on the balcony. She listened. There was not a sound. She leaned over the railing and held her hand out, and, in a moment, dropped the pansies. Then she went back to bed, wondering if she would find the little beauties all faded in the dirt in the morning. The next evening, when the students were in evidence at one of the lectures, she recognized her pansies, wilted, but securely pinned on the lapel of a coat.

At church, in class, on reception evenings, there was an exchange of expression, a hand-clasp, a touch, a sigh; call it telepathy, affinity, or psychology, under its spell they understood, responded, developed and experienced beyond the power of words to express. To cherish a secret is to increase its power.

Spring advanced. Unfortunately Katie Benedict was called home by the illness of her mother, and, in her absence, Eleanor found company in counting the stars from the little veranda under her window and in dreaming and longing for a presence that had become dearer to her than life. When Katie Benedict returned to school, after an absence of three

months, she found that her roommate was very much changed. She had left her bright and happy, she found her pensive and irritable. Eleanor often absented herself from meals and pleaded headache from church; she grew indifferent to class recitation, and, all at once, lost interest in the prospect of graduation. Yet, every one was surprised when it was whispered at the breakfast table one morning: "Eleanor Harding's father came for her and she left last night. She is going to Europe with her brother, the journalist."

"Only two months till commencement—he might have waited that long and let her graduate," was the answering comment.

"She said she was glad to go," stated Katie. "I helped her pack her things, and I think she was sorry to leave school, too, for she cried all the time."

"Did she get to tell the boys good-bye?" asked one.

"No," Katie answered. "She left a letter for me to deliver."

"To whom?" asked Varena.

Katie smiled, saying. "There's no secret in its contents. I know she wouldn't care if you read it."

Varena read: "Dear Friend, good-bye. I sail for Europe with Brother Tom in a few days. Do not write until you hear from me."

"What address is given?" asked one.

"She will send that when she writes back from Europe," explained Katie.

"I mean to whom is the note addressed?" she urged.

"That is my secret," said Katie, smiling.

"She wasn't expecting to go in a hurry," another girl announced; "for she bought a ticket to the lecture next Friday night."

"I'm sorry to lose her from our class; she would have been a handsome figure commencement night,"

mused Varena. "And she's so unlike the rest of us."

There was no reply to this comment; and, in a short time, Eleanor was forgotten, save for the cloud that seemed to fill the place of her bright presence.

Varena was busy planning for the closing functions of the school. Commencement essays and graduating dresses were under consideration. The air was fragrant with the blossoms of early fruit, and wild flowers were in abundance. On the morning of the first day of May, the young ladies were up early, dressed and out on the verandas, hunting for May baskets. It was one of the prettiest customs of the university boys, to surprise the girls with baskets of flowers, often containing boxes of candy, books, poems, or *billets-doux*. In a basket of exquisite roses, Varena found a verse of poetry that she thought was the sweetest verse that had ever been written, and around which hung an unsolvable mystery; for she knew there was not one student in the university for whom she had manifested a shadow of interest, or that entertained for her any feeling other than that which results from polite intercourse. She had conceived the idea that Russell thought she was made of some rare material and could live above the commonalities of life; and, in deference to his opinion, she was wedded to music, literature, and religion. But this dainty little verse, peeking out from among the red roses, touched a chord in her nature that had never vibrated before. She was in love with the poetry, but wished that the poet would remain anonymous. It read:

If I were a dewdrop
And you a red rose,
On thy soft silken petals
I'd gently repose.

Steal the sweetest of perfume,
And revel in bliss;
Seek thy lips sweetest dimple,
And dissolve in a kiss.

Varena was impatient for an opportunity to repeat her verse to Russell; but when she found it convenient to do so, as they walked home from a lecture, she could not bring herself to say the words. He questioned her about the different girls and their baskets; but each seemed to feel some peculiar restraint, which checked their confidential intercourse.

Horace Runyan had developed into a student of ambitions and ability and was a great friend to Ralph, who, in gratitude for his sister's former kindness, refused to enter any contest that would bring them into competition. If Horace desired to try for the medal in elocution, Ralph would not speak. At least this was the excuse with which he tried to satisfy his brother, who was chosen as valedictorian of his class. Russell was extremely vexed with Ralph for throwing away his last opportunity to display his ability and win the plaudits of his fellows. A year that, in the beginning, promised to be the brightest and best of the whole course, seemed to end in a cloud of uncertainty. There was nothing tangible to be criticized or surmounted. It was like atmospheric pressure—coming down into low, swampy plains, after having lived in a high, rarified altitude. Still, commencement week was complete in every form. The orations were excellent, the girls beautiful, the music of the best. The literary contests were good, only lacking in enthusiasm. Mary Baker, in the contemplated marriage with Professor Clayton, was very happy. The Farnam young people went home, rejoicing in the prospect of once more being alone with Grandmother.

CHAPTER XIII.

TROUBLE.

A premonition of evil caused Dr. Harding to withhold the purport of the telegram that he received from the Principal of Danboro Seminary, and simply state to his wife that he had a call that would take him away from the city for a few days. His voice was hard and irritable, his good-bye cold and uncommunicative. To these, she was in a measure accustomed; but that his personal necessities could be supplied in a small hand-grip, not including his medicine-case, was a matter of serious conjecture; and Luella Harding was tempted several times to go over and discuss her anxieties with her sister-in-law, Mabel Kendrick. By an intuition incomprehensible in its influence—unrecognized at the time, and remembered with gratitude afterward—she restrained her impatience and waited, with uncertainty, the return of her husband.

Dr. Thomas Harding travelled all night, reaching Danboro in the morning. He ate a light breakfast in the restaurant at the station, avoiding a hotel, where he would be required to register his name. About nine o'clock he called at the seminary and was received by the Principal. The business under consideration was briefly stated, and the Doctor was permitted to hold a long conversation with the matron of the school. He then went out, incognito, among the university students; presumably in the interest of the Y. M. C. A.; in reality, to study character and reputation. He did not see his daugh-

ter until she joined him in the carriage that carried them to the train; nor did he speak to her until they reached home.

Then, to the questioning amazement on his wife's face, he said. "She is sick. Take her to her room and keep her there."

His cold, hard, contemptuous bearing had wrought on his daughter, chilling her better nature into proud defiance, which was changed to sorrow and humiliation at the first glance of her gentle, loving mother; then, the locks melted, the flood-gate burst open, and she ran upstairs into her own room, and let the overwhelming stream of grief flow unrestrained. Mrs. Harding went to her daughter again and again, each time to find a deeper sense of misery. She begged her to put aside her wraps and rest and try to control her feelings, saying:

"I will not urge you, dear, until you care to talk."

She closed the door softly as she left the room, and the tears coursed down her cheeks at the pathetic cry: "O Mamma! Mamma! good, patient, gentle Mamma! Must I be the last straw that makes your burden too great to bear."

Dr. Harding came home late at night and demanded of his wife: "What have you learned?"

"Nothing. She's too deeply distressed to talk. I sent supper up to her room."

"Distressed! The hell she is. I'll see that she talks," he threatened.

"Please, Thomas, don't disturb her now. Let her rest to-night. To-morrow will be time," pleaded the mother.

He pushed past her, and mounted the stairs, stepping heavily on the polished hard wood. The room door was locked; and, threaten as he dared, he received no response from inside. His wife was not visible when he left the house; she wisely avoided showing her gratification in the forethought that

had secured for her daughter a few hours' respite.

Later, Mr. and Mrs. Kendrick came in to see Eleanor. They were to go east on the morning train, and be absent for several weeks; but they offered to postpone the trip if there was any probability of their niece being seriously ill. Luella Harding assured her brother that she appreciated their offer, though she would not permit them to remain at home. Eleanor, having retired, saw them only a few moments, and bade them a tearful good-bye.

Dick Harding was now a practising physician in a neighboring city, and Tom had sailed for Europe the day after his sister reached Louiston. By those of her acquaintances who had seen Eleanor get off the train, she was supposed to have come to Louiston to have her elegant dress fitted and elaborately trimmed for the commencement exercises. While it was not possible to keep the servants from knowing of her protracted stay at home, it was only necessary to admit into her confidence the faithful little maid who had served her for several years.

Eleanor locked her door whenever she heard her father's step or voice; but, when her mother looked at her, or spoke to her, she burst into tears with the heart-rending wail: "O Mamma! Mamma! you are so good and so gentle and patient. If you would just be mean and cross to me, I would not be so miserable. It is killing me to see how I am breaking your kind heart. O Mamma, I don't know how it ever happened. It was just one bewildering moment when, intoxicated with ecstatic rapture, the world seemed a phantom, and people negligible qualities. Oh that I had died instead of Aunt Mabel's little baby!"

"Hush, dear; I know how deeply repentant you are. Do not think of me. Turn to Him who made you, with all your beauty and your weakness, and ask His forgiveness," pleaded her mother.

"Isn't it too late, Mamma? Will God hear me, now?" cried the girl.

So insistent was their grief that they were unconscious of a presence in the hall. Dr. Harding, determined to probe his daughter until she acknowledged certain facts that it was important for him to know, had come up in noiseless slippers and heard only the wail: "Oh that I had died instead of Aunt Mabel's baby!" He was staggered and fell back with a pain in his breast like a blow from an unseen hand. "Retribution," he murmured as he stole away. Filled with remorse, he went to his operating rooms, where he spent most of his time, until the cruelties he practised on the helpless animals hardened his heart to its abnormal state of revenge.

In the meantime Eleanor had grown careless of her door, and was surprised one evening when her father stood before her. She closed the book she had been reading, and prayerfully waited for the encounter.

In a mild tone of voice, more dreaded than his harsher speech, he asked: "Eleanor, what was the cause of your misfortune?"

"I was," came the prompt reply.

"There were other influences and circumstances. What were they?" he questioned.

"The influence of the stars; the warm South wind that kissed my cheek; the ravishing perfume of the flowers that found their way to the little balcony under my window; the mythological poems that I studied, that told of love of the gods. I can't explain the mystery of it all. I am weary of thinking and sick with longing."

She seemed to forget that she was speaking to her father, and he saw that she was living again those hours of the past, and his mind went back to long banished memories. Another face filled the space between him and his daughter; a young girl

as he had loved her: then, a happy bride when he hated her: again, an agonized mother and a dead child. With these came the words of the minister's text a few Sundays previous: "Vengeance is mine, I will recompense."

He turned and hastily left the house; and, Eleanor, aroused from her reverie, was surprised to find that the interview was ended. A sad sigh escaped her and a deep sense of gratitude filled her heart, for she was sure that some power stronger than human influence had subdued her father's wrath.

Later, when she kissed her mother "good night," she put her arms around her neck and whispered: "Mamma, dear, Mamma, you can't understand the awful loneliness of my heart, and, forgive me, Mamma, but it's true, there is the sweetest sadness that comes with the memories of those school days; and I do believe that God will take care of me, because he softened father's anger to-day."

"I am thankful for even temporary peace, dear, now go to bed and try to rest," replied her mother.

She buried her face in the pillows and sobbed herself to sleep, and dreamed of the little balcony and the stars and pansies blooming in the cold snow.

Whenever Doctor Harding entered his daughter's room with the determination to force her to a confession of the circumstances that brought an abrupt ending to her college career, she seemed to be protected by some supernatural power. Though his anger grew more bitter and his hatred more hellish; some word of the girl, innocently spoken, some sentence framed without design, would touch a secret chord that, vibrating with his own thoughts, a phantom of his evil deeds would rise up between them, and shield her from his invectives.

Weeks past. Late one afternoon he came into his wife's room with an open letter in his hand,

"A letter from Tom. He expects to sail the thirtieth of next month. What are you going to do about it? What are you going to do anyway? Something must be done before he gets home."

His wife did not reply. He walked the floor, muttering to himself, "Perversity—damn stubbornness—headstrong."

"Doesn't she come by some of her faults honestly?" questioned Luella Harding, hesitatingly.

"That's enough! I don't want to hear any more about the sin of the parent visited on the children. If there were any virtue in your saintly prayers, you might avert the evils of hereditary depravity," sneered the Doctor.

"I haven't lost all my faith yet," mildly replied his wife.

"Well, I'll supplement it with works. Take these powders and give her one every three hours."

"She does not need any medicine——" began the mother.

"Will you give them to her," he demanded, "or shall I stay at home and see that my directions are carried out?"

"I'll give her a powder every three hours," she meekly replied.

When the doctor left the house, Mrs. Harding took the medicine from all the little papers save one, and replaced it with sugar and flour. She then went up to her daughter's room and told her what she had done, and said:

"I am sure that the powder he intended you should take is a very strong medicine, and he will watch for its effect on you. You will have to do some clever acting in order to deceive him."

"Do you mean for me to feign—to make believe? That is so unlike you, Mamma," said Eleanor.

"My dear, in the last hour a revolution has passed

through my soul. Another self is dominant: the old submissive one is completely crushed. Henceforth I shall determine your welfare and, 'the Lord willing,' accomplish your destiny, praying that I sin not as a wife and mother."

"Mayn't you be mistaken, Mamma? I told him that I have a severe headache. Perhaps he feels more kindly than you think?"

"No, dear, I have learned to read his face. I know what a certain twitching of his eye and the hard set of his jaw mean."

"O, I am so unutterably sad!" sobbed Eleanor.

"Your father is desperate and—and, I'll try not to judge him too harshly. But we must deceive him for a few days."

"What good will a few days do?"

"Your Uncle Richard and Aunt Mabel will be at home next week. Their presence will be a restraining influence."

"O, but I don't want to see them, Mamma. Can't we go away to spend the summer?"

"We might possibly arrange it. We'll think about it. You know Richard has purchased a carriage that is run by electricity, called an automobile. Judge Johnson says it's a wonderful machine. I never knew him so elated over anything as he is over their automobile. He has arranged for Richard to take your father and some friends on a pleasure trip down through Kentucky. But we have other things to think of now. This medicine, that is, the real medicine, in all probability would make a change in the action of your pulse——" she hesitated, endeavoring to hide her tears, "you mustn't let the doctor take your temperature or feel your pulse. So, perhaps you had better play the part of the willful hysteric. Watch his questioning, and answer as you think he anticipates. Be sure that you

don't take any medicine that he may want to give you till I have had a chance to——"

"You don't think he would——" Eleanor stared, with questioning horror.

"I hope not, dear. He was up very late last night, and his countenance was dark and severe. He's been strangely restless all morning. He forbid me to speak to him of Mabel's coming."

"Maybe, he don't like it because they have the first automobile?"

"It's not that, for if he likes it he will get one of his own. It would be an advantage to him in his practice."

"Well, I wish something would happen to take his thoughts away from me. I am weary, sick and sad. I know that the way I failed in finishing my senior year was a great disappointment to him, but it does not justify him in adding more wickedness to what can't be helped," sighed the girl.

"Be courageous and follow my advice. Don't let him get any satisfaction. You know how to act better than I can tell you."

"I can do anything in the world for your sake, Mamma, I would willingly die for you, if by so doing I could blot out all of your unhappy life and give you that which you deserve. But I will not suffer for the cruel man whose false pride and egoism would condemn me to eternal misery."

The powders were taken regularly, and at 9 o'clock in the evening Dr. Harding went to Eleanor's room. He found her in bed, sobbing. Her hair was disheveled and her covers awary.

"Where are you suffering?" inquired the doctor.

Her mumbled reply from the depths of the pillows was unintelligible.

"Where are those powders?" he asked, looking around,

His wife, who was listening, came in from the hall, and he questioned her. She knew he was not satisfied; but she did not shrink as she would have done under other circumstances. She was resolved to outwit him by deception, or, failing in that, resist in open defiance.

"Has she slept any?" he asked.

"I do not know," she replied.

"It's your business to know," he asserted.

"I was kept in the parlor with callers," she answered.

"Hang callers! How many more damn questions did your callers ask?" he questioned.

"Nothing more than to ask if Eleanor was improving, and if she really had tuberculosis," said Mrs. Harding. Then, to hide a smile that took her unaware, she added: "They were very kind in their sympathy."

From behind her father's back Eleanor was peeking from under the pillow; her face was aglow with fun and mischief, which the traces of real sorrow made most pathetic. The Doctor turned sharply around and was greeted with a prolonged groan.

"Give me those powders," he demanded.

"There is only one left," Mrs. Harding replied, mildly.

"There should be two," he stated.

"I spilled one," she lied.

He took the real powder, opened and examined it, and said: "Give this to her now, and I will prepare some more."

Mrs. Harding crossed the room to get a spoon and glass of water from a stand, and, as she did so, exchanged the real powder for the false one; and after a great deal of coaxing, she quieted her daughter sufficiently to take it.

"You had better stay with her. I'll be in my

study for the rest of the evening," said the Doctor, as he left the room.

"Take that awful powder out of your mouth, Mamma. I saw you slip it in. Spit it out," urged Eleanor, as soon the door closed on her father.

"I did, dear, the moment Thomas turned his back." They smiled into each other's tear-stained eyes. "You acted well, can you keep it up?"

"I'll try, Mamma. It is fun to fool him. How shall I perform when he comes again?"

Mrs. Harding raised her finger and looked toward the door. Both listened and heard a sound like one breathing excitedly. Eleanor began to moan and groan and fret. In a few minutes her father opened the door. He tried to take her hands and examine her pulse, and she flung wildly about. He laid his hand on her hair, and she buried her face in the pillows. Her mother tried to soothe her, and she screamed and cried, taking care not to make a noise that could be heard very far.

"Give her this powder and it will quiet her nerves so she may sleep. At one o'clock begin with these pink powders, and give her one every two hours. I have a call to the west side of the city that will detain me all night. I want Eleanor to sleep while I'm absent."

"I'll go down and get some fresh water," said Mrs. Harding. She allowed some trivial duties to detain her in the dining-room until her husband had left the house. When she returned to her daughter's room, they laughed and cried together.

"I hope, dear, that you can sleep in peace to-night, though I never know what to expect from Thomas. He may return at any moment, or he may stay away for days."

"Mamma, you are so kind and good to me. I wish I could make you know how deeply I appreciate

your patience, and especially your willingness to let me suffer alone; to make all this sorrow mine."

"I believe I understand you, dear, but I trust that 'the end is not yet.' "

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SPECTRE.

"Do you think the old man is a dullard?" inquired the Adjutant-General of his assistant.

"I'm more inclined to think that he's a detective, employed by a party who has reasons for avoiding the police," replied the assistant.

"What evidence have you?" inquired the superior officer.

"The manner in which he frequents public places, without any apparent object, save to watch for men. He never smokes, drinks, gambles, or swears; he simply sits for hours at a stretch, intently watching each customer as he appears. Having fully identified them all, he quietly disappears and seeks a position in a new locality. He was over a month in that gambling den of Blodget's, which the police scattered last week. The toughs kicked him out; still he persisted, and they finally gave him a seat in the hall, where he sat staring at each stranger until he removed his hat and coat. In the lobby of the Poor Man's Eating-House, where the men are in a hurry, he would grab hold of them and turn them half round, then civilly beg their pardon. One inspection is all he wants. He doesn't waste time on a second look. Policeman or vagabond, banker or chimney-sweep, all possess the same interest for him," replied the assistant.

"Doubtless you're correct," said the Adjutant-General of the Salvation Army.

"When walking on the street, he'll pass a man, and turn quickly to go back on the other side of him," said the assistant, laughing.

"A case of aberration," concluded the Adjutant.

"Rather conclusive evidence that the old colored man is not concerned about the actions of anyone," stated the assistant; "simply looking for a certain man that he will recognize by some earmark when he sees him. There goes his nurse, question her."

"How is your patient, Miss Fredereka?" inquired the officer.

"Still flighty and very weak," was the reply.

"Where was he found? Have you learned any facts about him?"

"It seems that he'd followed a funeral procession conducted by the Masons and Odd Fellows. He'd been walking very rapidly, going back and forth, first on one side of the parade and then on the other, and had doubtless fainted from exhaustion. He was found unconscious by the side of the road and brought to the Salvation Army Hospital," replied the nurse.

"What does the doctor think of his condition?" questioned the assistant. "I'm interested in him."

"It acts like a sunstroke, though the doctor thinks he will recover," said Miss Fredereka.

"I hope so," added the officer. "Such faithfulness to a purpose deserves its reward. Could you gather any information from his wanderings?"

"I could only distinguish the letters, D. V. But toward morning he was quite rational for a little while, and told me that he had been hunting for a man who had only one ear. He has gone from place to place, in the grog-shops and saloons, in Chinatown, over at the Italian quarters, among the Jews and other foreigners," she stated interestedly.

"I'll wager you've promised to continue his search, in case he dies," said the officer, kindly.

"Perhaps. He's to tell me all about it when he's stronger."

"His man may be dead," suggested the assistant.

"Uncle Henry believes that he is not, because his life is necessary for some great retribution," averred the nurse.

"I've been working with the army a long time, and we do occasionally find an imposter," asserted the officer.

"I've been with the army nearly twenty years and I've never seen the righteous forsaken," replied the nurse.

"But you have, occasionally, been mistaken in those whom you thought were righteous," persisted the officer, blandly.

"When I was young," said Fredereka, smiling, "I had faith in every one. I have learned to distinguish between the good and the near-good; the bad and the near-bad."

Days and weeks passed. The voices of spring were hushed in the heat of the summer sun; scantily clothed children rolled out on the sidewalks; crowded tenements opened up for ventilation; buildings took on new, dry colors, and the air was vibrant with outdoor life.

"Where've you been, Uncle Henry? I've not given you permission to go out yet. You're not strong enough. And here I've sat up until nearly twelve o'clock," scolded Miss Fredereka.

Henry, trembling and shaking, fell into a chair near his cot.

"Ah, Miss Fredereka, I've done seen a sure 'nough ghost," said the old man.

"You're not well, Uncle Henry, and your imagination got the better of you," replied the nurse. "There are no such things as ghosts."

Henry shook his head. "I got powerful restless, an' just started to take a little walk. The moon

was bright an' I ca'culated that I could see plainer if I got a little ways out from the city. You see, Miss Fred'reka, I told you as how I could look at the moon an' know that my Misses, the Grandmother, could look at the same object. An' when I get homesick for the old place, I just go out an' look at the moon."

"And did you see the ghost in the moon?" queried the nurse.

"Sure, law! No, Miss Fred'reka, I was a walkin' 'long by the cemetery; an' just as I looked over toward the hill that comes down back of them tall marbles, I seen a man, powerful tall. Leastwise, I thought he was a man. He was swingin' his long arms, an' his long white hair was a streamin' in the wind; an' he has a beard like Aaron's beard that come clean down to the edge of his garments, with dew on it. Yes, sir; Miss Fred'reka, I sure 'nough seen just such a man a comin' down that hill, powerful fast. All to once he run up to a big gravestone and swung his long arms up an' down; an' then, pretty soon, he screamed a powerful strange, wailin' moan that made the chills go up an' down my back, an' took all the kink out of my hair. Sure! Miss Fred'reka, it done stood up straight as an Injun's. My knees knocked together so as I couldn't move. Then everything was still like, an' the groanin' got softer an' softer; an' I kept my eye straight on that tall man. The moon come out from behind a cloud, an' sure, Miss Fred'reka, just while I was lookin' right at that man, he was gone!"

"Like a flash he vanished, did he?" added the nurse.

"Sure! it was no man. It was a real live ghost," persisted Henry.

"But if he were alive he would not be a ghost," laughed the nurse.

"When a bad man dies," said Henry, "I 'low his

soul comes back to haunt the earth. When he is movin' round, he sure is 'live. When he disappears, he sure is dead. 'If he expurgates his sins,' our old preacher say, 'de Lord let him rest in peace.' That's the why folks be 'fraid o' ghosts. Leastways, maybe I don't know much for sure," soliloquized Henry, still nervous over his experience.

"If you will obey orders and not go out for several days, I'll have the matter investigated and find your live ghost some night; but the recovery of your health and the continuation of your special mission is of more importance to you," said the nurse.

Fredereka Lewis was too anxious for the old negro to get sufficiently strong to begin his quest for the missing man, to endanger his health by risking another trip to the graveyard; so she secured the company of the bravest one of the nurses, and following Uncle Henry's directions, went out near the cemetery. Having secreted themselves in a comfortable place behind some shrubbery, they watched for the appearance of the live ghost. They thought it probable that some one was haunting the tombs for pillage; boys had been known to exchange flowers and ribbons, stolen from the graves, for cigarettes. It would require only a little imagination to make a prowling boy a ghost among the tombstones. The bravest will experience uncanny sensations in watching a graveyard at night, when the moon turns every shadow into a moving object, and the white stones reflect a different face with each passing cloud. The two women were nervously conversing in an undertone, when Fredereka caught her companion by the hand, and they held their breath and gazed out over the cemetery. From the centre of the tall, dark hill that towered back of the city of the dead, there emerged an object. The old colored man was not mistaken. The live ghost, with long limbs and flying hair and beard, came rapidly down the hill. He

wandered on, turning first in one direction and then the other, when, suddenly, he made for the centre of the grounds and stood a moment before a large monument in the form of a cross. The grave was up on a little hillock, which made the cross and the strange apparition stand out distinctly. The girls watched and listened, trembling but afraid to move, convinced, yet doubting their own vision. He waved his arms and clasped the body of the cross to his breast, and the unearthly wails that he sent forth might have come from Dante's "Inferno": "There shrieks are heard and lamentations, moans." Then, under the light of the full moon, he speedily disappeared. The earth seemed to open and swallow him, as when Moses commanded and Korah was engulfed.

The girls were never quite able to understand how they got back to the city. A few nights later, in company with two young men, they occupied the same retired spot and watched for the appearance and disappearance of the live ghost, and witnessed the same mysterious performance. The intention had been to follow the spectre and learn how it vanished. But a threatening rain-cloud made a legitimate excuse for hurrying home, and purporting a daylight visit to examine the tomb. Half a dozen went out; but there were no marks of the human, and no revelations of the supernatural. The report of a ghost spread through the city, and, night after night, curious crowds haunted the outskirts of the cemetery, enlightened by imagination and strengthened by confabulation. Consequently the tales brought back were contradictory and unreliable; and, doubtless, such promiscuity was disgusting to a respectable ghost. However that may be, the interest waned, and the variety-loving Americans turned in pursuit of new amusements.

Uncle Henry, dominated by the perplexities of his

own secret, morbidly connected it with this new mystery. During the weeks of his illness he had forgotten to send to the post-office and a letter addressed to him had been returned. Left without money, he asked for work in the hospital. There was not much that he could do, though he faithfully made an effort to be useful.

"Uncle Henry," said Fredereka, coming into the ward where the old colored man was fanning a sick boy, "I want to make a bargain with you."

"Sure, Miss Fredereka, I'm agreed," replied Uncle Henry.

"If I give you something very nice, will you do as I request?"

"Ain't I always 'bedient to your commands?" inquired the old man.

"Yes; you're all right. Here's the letter you've been expecting, and, if it contains money, we simply don't want you to start home until some of these poor sufferers are out of the way. That last train-wreck is giving us a dozen more bruised and mangled people to wait on, and we can't spare you."

Fredereka Lewis gave the old man a letter. It contained fifty dollars in bills and four pages of letter-paper written over in a plain, smooth chirography, which was well sprinkled with tears before Uncle Henry had finished reading it. Then, he folded the five-dollar bills separately and put them in different pockets, reasoning that if he was robbed in one pocket, the others might escape. Experience had proved the prudence of his plan. He offered to pay twenty-five dollars for his board and care while ill in the hospital; but it was refused.

"'After many days,' D. V.," murmured Henry.

"What do you mean, Uncle Henry? You were always calling on Grandmother, and saying 'D. V.' when you were delirious," said Fredereka.

"Grandmother is my old Mistress. The children

an' the neighbor's children, they all call her Grandmother. All her future is planned, D. V. All the past accepted, 'cause it come, D. V.," explained Uncle Henry.

"The doctor said D. V. stood for the latin, Deo Volente, the Lord Willing," stated Fredereka.

"Sure. The Lord willing, this here boy will get well, an' we can send him home to his mother, an' he will never run away any more." He smiled at the boy as he wakened from a long sleep. The little fellow had played truant from school and been run over by an automobile.

"Good-bye, boy; I'm glad you're better. I must hasten away. I'm detailed to carry some medicine to a sick man on the hill back of the Catholic cemetery, and I must find a man to go out and care for him," said the nurse, as she arranged the boy's pillows so he would rest comfortably.

"Please, Miss Fredereka, let me go with you?" asked Henry.

"You can't walk fast and we must hurry to get back before dark," the nurse answered.

"I'd like powerful well to go," urged Henry; "Pears like I got to go."

"Come on, then. I'll carry the basket of food, and you the medicine," said Fredereka, smiling.

"Powerful obliged to you." The old man rose at once, called a girl to take his place by the cot, nodded his head to the boy, and went softly out with the head nurse.

There are two main roads that lead south from the city. One branches southwest past the Catholic and Masonic cemeteries; the other, southeast, is separated from a view of the graveyards by a hill, or cluster of great and small hills. In early days, a number of fine residences, a church, a small bank building, and an amusement-hall looked down on the growing city from these picturesque heights. A

great fire had destroyed the dwellings, and the other houses had been neglected or torn down. All that remained of the bank was the vault, which had been built into the hillside. It made a very good basement kitchen, or cellar. A one-room cottage had been put up in front of the old vault, and, into it Fredereka and Henry entered with their Salvation Army supplies for the sick man. A table stood in the centre of the room; two cane-bottom chairs were near the window, a clock ticked on the shelf. In the corner was an old-fashioned corded bedstead with straw-filled bedtick. A quilt, pieced after the pattern of the "ocean wave," faded and worn, displayed the various colors of the scraps left from dresses of the child. Fredereka knew at once that a loving mother's hand had pieced the quilt, and the knowledge might give her the key to the man's confidence. The moaning from under the cover was not pleasant to hear, and the nurse gently turned back the spread. As she did so, she drew back with a start and looked toward Uncle Henry, whose eyes were riveted on his live ghost.

"Sit down, Uncle Henry. Remember, D. V., it will be all right," said Fredereka, with a forced severity in her tone that was necessary to strengthen his trembling old body.

"Mr. Adams," spoke the girl. The man opened his eyes but did not move. He was lying with his face resting on one hand.

"The doctor has sent us with some medicine and food for you. He said your name was Adams."

"What doctor?" mumbled the man, glaring at her with angry eyeballs.

"The doctor from the Salvation Army hospital. He picked you up in the ravine last week and brought you home. Don't you remember of telling him that you were trying to crawl up to your house?" The sweet tone and the army-nurse influence subdued his

anger, and he remained quiet. She continued: "The doctor said your clothes were wet through; you must have some clean garments or your fever will increase, and, perhaps, serious trouble result."

Henry began to tremble. To touch the man was as much as he could do. He would run home rather than remain alone in the room with him.

Comprehending the situation and understanding the negro's dread and anxiety, the nurse added: "I'll help dress you after Henry has bathed you and brushed your hair. While he's doing that I'll wash this front window." The window did not need it; for everything about the room was clean and in order.

Henry timidly approached the bed and essayed to remove the quilt; but the invalid held on to it.

"Better hang it in the sun to air, an' let me put this blanket over you," advised the colored man.

The man shook his head.

Fredereka came near and said: "You must have your clothes changed. If we don't get you nice and comfortable, the Doctor will censure us."

"Doctor?" he demanded savagely.

"The Salvation Army physician. We work under his orders. This is a pretty patchwork quilt. It is called the ocean wave. I have one like it. My mother made it for me. I suspect your mother pieced this for you. That's why you love it, and don't want to sleep under any other." His face softened and his eyes grew moist. "I'd like to put it in the sun by the window. You may have it again." She removed the quilt gently and motioned to Henry to get to work.

The hospital training enabled the colored man to accomplish the changes with little fatigue to the patient and the bed was soon made comfortable. The muddy garments were carried out and Henry began the more unpleasant task of combing the long, gray

hair. He had smoothed out one side and turned the sick man's face toward the wall that he might more conveniently brush the other side. Fredereka, busily arranging the provisions on the little table, had stepped to the door to fill a glass with water from a pail outside; but it dropped from her fingers and splashed back into the water, and her whole being thrilled through and through at the sound of Uncle Henry's voice.

In surprised, exultant, glorified, yet subdued tones, he murmured: "D. V., Grandmother, D. V."

Fredereka came to the bed. The old negro was supporting himself against the wall, with hands clasped as in prayer, and eyes gazing up at heaven. The shaggy, gray hair was drawn back from the invalid's face, exposing a peculiar scar just back of the jaw. The long-sought-for man was found at last.

"What's the ado?" asked Luke Adams.

"Uncle Henry is very religious, Mr. Adams," began Fredereka, "and often prays."

That seemed to satisfy him; but, presently he said: "I pray to the Virgin Mother. Didn't he say, Grandmother?"

Henry seemed metamorphosed from the timid old man to youth, strength, and happiness. He caressed the capillose head tenderly, lovingly, and grinned as he replied:

"I can pray an' give thanks to Virgins, Mothers, an' Grandmothers, an' all the saints in glory. Just you take your medicine an' eat a bite. We're goin' to get you well." Henry knew what he was working for now. All fear, or superstition, had gone with his discovery.

The nurse fixed the medicine, and Henry saw that it was swallowed. In the vault or cellar, a little oilstove was found on which she made coffee, and the man ate supper and felt revived and more willing

to talk. Henry begged to remain all night. After years of strenuous effort he dared not lose sight of his man; so a blanket was spread down on the floor and a coat rolled up for a pillow. The next morning, a cot and necessary comforts were sent up from the hospital. The man, Luke Adams, was weak and exhausted in mind and body, and submitted passively to their plans. In a few days Uncle Henry was securely established in the queer cottage on the hill. All that he could learn from his charge was that he had a task to finish; that done and he was ready to die. He could not be coaxed into telling about himself. Night after night, he grew more and more restless, and at last demanded of the doctor to know the worst of his condition. When told that one limb was paralyzed so that he might not be able to walk again, he tore his hair and raved wildly. Helpless and exhausted he was forced to listen to the advice of the old negro.

"You just got to get strong as you can, an' maybe I can help you to walk a little," he said soothingly.

"Will you help me down to that big cross in the Catholic cemetery?" asked Luke Adams, anxiously.

"Fetch you down there?" asked Henry, startled. "You couldn't get back; I couldn't tote you up the hill."

"I'll get back. Will you take me down?" pleaded the man.

"I'll go look over the hill an' see how far 'tis," said Henry.

He went out and walked up over a ridge from where he could look down on the city of white monuments. The air was balmy and invigorating and he thought of the sudden disappearance of the ghost, and wondered if he could solve the mystery by carrying Luke Adams to the tomb. Before he would promise to carry him down the hill, he would require

him to give up his secret and explain the task he had to accomplish. Henry was "powerfully" afraid of the cemetery; but the success of his long quest was a stronger passion than fear. He knew, too, that he could pack the man up the hill; for he was not much more than skin and bones.

Returning to the cottage and pulling a chair near the bed he said: "I want to ask you a question, Marse Luke Adams. Nights, when you think I'm asleep, what are you groaning about?"

"I want to get up and walk," sputtered the man.

"Sure! You are pow'ful anxious to walk, an' you pow'ful troubled 'bout what you done long time ago," said Henry, sympathetically.

"How do you know? Have I been delirious?" asked Adams, alarmed.

"I won't tell nothin'. You can trust me like a priest," said Henry, uncertainly.

"Priest! God knows my sentence is long and hard, and it may be purgatory in the end," moaned Adams.

"Sure, powerful sure, the good Lord knows it all." Henry's nerves were taut. He feared the conversation would end abruptly as it had done on other nights when he was near to touching the secret spring of the man's life.

After some moments had elapsed, Adams asked: "What have you heard me talking about?"

"Uncle Henry is honorable, he don't eavedrop," said the colored man, aggrieved.

"You couldn't help hearing over on your cot, when you're awake and I'm a dreaming. What do you know? I'm not mad about it. You're a friend to me, and you're going to be legs to me. So I—— What do you know, blast it? What are you taking care of me for?" urged the paralytic.

"The Salvation Army works for the Master," said Henry, solemnly.

"They work and ask no questions. You've been trying to pump me all the time. I'm no fool." A flicker of a smile came into Adams' eyes.

"Lord forgive me for pryin' into a sick man's secrets," prayed Henry, with feeling.

"What secrets?" demanded Adams. "What do you know?"

Henry made the experiment that Miss Fredereka had suggested. "I know how you love that old mother, an' how you hate that other doctor."

First tears, then a burning flash of anger shot from Adams' eyes. "She loved the devil who ruined her. Poor mother! poor mother! Henry, carry me to the tomb, I must go. It's for her sake that I must go," he begged. "Let my soul be damned so she may pass from purgatory."

"Now, see here, Marse Adams. Just you get quiet an' listen to this old Baptist nigger. There ain't no purgatory 'cept on the earth. Your old mammy has been all the time in the busom of the Lord, an' you been wastin' a powerful lot of time grievin' for her. Your own sins 're all you need to 'tend to. An' that wicked doctor——" Henry hesitated, wondering if he was dead. "What he done——" Still he hesitated.

"I promised mother on her death-bed that I'd never tell on him; and, because I refused to confess it to the priest, I've got this awful penance to perform," groaned Adams.

"I see, I see," said Henry, sympathetically, not in the least comprehending what Adams had admitted.

"Are you going to carry me to the tomb?" demanded Adams. Getting no reply, he turned his face to the wall and refused to talk.

Henry looked out on the still night, at the waning moon and myriad stars, and out over the city, where the lights and noise and smoke of animated nature and living beings gave marrow to the bone and

strength to the heart. Then he walked over the little hillside and again looked down on the slumbering city of the dead. With both in view the conglomeration of sonoric sound on the right, the solitary, sepulchral silence on the left, he deliberated. Outside the city, on the road that leads past the cemetery, were the quarters of the Salvation Army. To keep their nearness uppermost in his mind, would strengthen his nerve and sustain his courage to the daring feat of solving, at once and alone, the mystery of the evanescent ghost.

He returned to the cottage, and, lighting the candle, went into the vault, which was used both for a clothes-press and a cellar. He got a pair of trousers and a linen coat, and came to the bed. Adams was now watching him, his eyes radiant with joy. Beard and hair so covered his face that the organs of vision were the only index of his emotions. Now they shone with a strange, unnatural fire that almost shook Henry out of his resolution to carry him to the cross. As the old quilt was laid back Adams patted it lovingly, and submitted nervously to the dressing. He was elated over the prospect, and impatient to be on the way. With his arms around Henry's neck, his breast on his back, and the negro's hands clasped under his trouser seat, they started over the hill.

"What'll you be taken for?" asked Luke Adams. "Croesus with a bag of gold, or old Peter Piper with his stolen sheep?"

"Ghosts," panted Henry.

"Wonder if any one took me for a ghost?" asked Adams, interestedly.

"That was when I first made your acquaintance," panted Henry. "Crowds come out to see you."

"And got disappointed. I saw them, but didn't know they were looking for me. I was sick, got too wet, took cold, and, now, these legs. I guess the

Lord sent you to lend me your legs. Can you hold out? Am I very heavy?" He began to grow nervous.

The trip was accomplished with difficulty. A bar in the iron fence around the cemetery, which Adams had fixed to slip out to admit him, had become rusty and required a good deal of kicking to work it loose. But the man was at last put down on the grassy mound in front of the tomb, above which stood the large white cross. Henry stepped back and wiped the perspiration from his brow.

"Now you go home," ordered Luke Adams.

Henry stood dumfounded. Home; and leave a man who could not walk a step or even stand on his feet! All his superstitious horror of ghosts came back to him. Go home and let the man disappear and come up out of the bowels of the earth and greet him in his bed!

"Go," again Adams commanded.

Henry went back toward the road with a half-conceived idea of watching him from a distance. Adams, twisting his neck, saw him and begged him to leave him alone for an hour. Henry moved farther away, but still could see him. From his half-sitting attitude, Adams lifted his long arms wildly, and, as he pointed to the crown above the cross, he seemed to be rising out of the earth in a supernatural form. The negro could stand no more, and took to his heels and ran for the road. Before he reached the gate, he heard the old wailing lamentation, and, as he climbed the high fence he glanced back, and saw the arms outspread, then drop, and the man disappear. Henry did not stop until he reached the barracks.

Fredereka Lewis was out, and, not wishing to confide in any other, he asked for a place to rest, not expecting to sleep. But the calm and peace of his surroundings, aided by his physical exhaustion, im-

prisoned his mind in slumber. With the coming of daylight, came the feeling of abject disgust with himself, that he should have lost the opportunity of solving the mystery of the tomb, and forsaken the man before he had secured the information that he knew he possessed. Without a moment's hesitation, he procured some of the daily provisions and returned to the cottage. There were no signs of any one having been there before him. Thanking the good Lord that the weather was fair, he returned to the city and found Miss Fredereka and told her all that he had done. Together, they went to the cemetery; but no one was there. Ascending the hill by the path that Henry had carried the sick man down, they found no traces of him; the inside of the cottage was undisturbed. The old servant was so distressed and conscience-stricken that he opened his heart to the nurse and asked her to help him; he told her why he had hunted for the man and what he wished to find out. She was deeply interested. Suddenly their colloquy was interrupted by the sound of a familiar moan. They sprang out of the door together and found Luke Adams a few yards from the house. Henry carried him in and laid him on the bed. His clothes had the appearance of his having passed through the bowels of the earth, though no aperture in the ground was discoverable.

The doctor's call, in the afternoon, dispelled all hope of recovery, and the old negro began again to probe the man's past. He sat by his bed and patiently waited for returning vitality. Slow, quiet breathing was the only evidence of life. He lay like one physically and mentally exhausted. One long, bony hand crept from under the quilt, and the index-finger pointed to a place on the wall opposite. Henry looked and could see nothing. The insistency of the eyes compelled him to go and examine closely. There on the white plaster near the window, were seven

columns of figures. Each line beginning with one and going straight down, marked the numerals to one hundred. Six columns were complete. The seventh column began with one and continued to ninety-eight. On a nail in the window-frame hung a pencil tied to a string. Henry concluded that the pencil was kept there to add each number as circumstances indicated. He took the pencil and looked at Adams, who tried to speak. His voice was so weak that Fredereka could barely distinguish, "nine, nine."

"Do you want me to mark down ninety-nine?" asked Henry.

Adams nodded.

Henry put it down and remarked: "One more an' you will have seven columns of one hundred each."

The man's eyes brightened in pleasurable anticipation, and he whispered: "Once more, carry me to the cross."

"Do you mean that you have gone to that tomb in the grave-yard six hundred and ninety-nine times?" asked Fredereka, in amazement.

Something like a smile flickered through Luke Adams' eyes as he assented, and whispered: "Once more, take me to the cross once more."

The pleading pathos of his eyes affected Henry's nerves, and he rushed out of the room. As he walked up and down before the door with the setting sun laughing in his face, light dawned on his muddled brain. He approached the bed gently, sat down, and stroked the long fingers, and cleared his throat. Tears forced their way to the surface, and he blew his nose as excuse to wipe them away.

"Marse Luke Adams, have you been doin' penance for six hundred years?" he inquired tenderly.

Again, a smile played about the man's eyes, but settled into gloom as he whispered. "Not years,

but times. One more and Mother is out of purgatory and I am absolved."

"Didn't I tell you there ain't no purgatory?" insisted Henry.

"Are you wise as the priest? He was good to Mother. Take me to the cross, to the cross," he pleaded, in sepulchral whispers.

Henry pondered seriously. "You take this medicine and go to sleep, so you can get strong 'nough to talk."

"Then will you take me to the cross?" pleaded Adams. The wild eagerness of his deep-set eyes surrounded by over-hanging gray eyebrows and white bearded face was startlingly dramatic.

"Sleep first," persisted Henry.

Adams shook his head and clutched the quilt spasmodically.

"I'll take you down on conditions," said Henry emphatically.

Adams closed his eyes and feigned sleep. Henry sat in the door nervously watching for the nurse, who had gone into the city, promising to return before bedtime. Two hours passed into eternity. He went in and prepared some gruel and gave it to the sick man. Then, a little stimulant seemed to strengthen him, so that he could speak aloud.

"The cross, the cross. Carry me down," he begged.

Henry nodded and sat down by the bed. "What made your priest give you such a powerful hard task?" he asked timidly.

"I kept my promise to my dying mother," said Adams, with a gleam of pleasure in his eyes.

"Uh-huh," grunted Henry. "'Cause you were faithful to your pretty ma, you have been punished." Henry was persuasive and sympathetic.

"She was a beauty; but she died without confes-

sion, and the priest could not administer extreme unction. Poor Mother, she loved that Doctor better than her soul's salvation. I swore to her that I would not betray him. It was all the comfort I could give her—that, and the promise to take the child to him." Adams ceased speaking from weakness and distress, as he recalled the last hour of the mother whom he had loved devotedly.

"The child?" questioned Henry, softly.

Adams seemed to have forgotten about the child, but continued: "I did not go to confession for five years. I was a tool for *him*; buying dogs, hunting rats, stealing birds, and *hating* him. A new house was built down by the road, and a new sexton employed. I was sick here in our old home and he left me to starve and die. The old priest, a good father, found me and nursed me back to life. I made a clean confession of all, but the identity of the man who murdered my mother—Poor, dear mother, her expiation from purgatory and my purification could be accomplished either by the betrayal of her confidence or the nightly trips to the tomb." He sighed wearily.

The colored man waited patiently, then gently questioned: "The child. You took it to him?"

Adams assented.

"What became of it?" asked Henry, tremblingly.

Adams pointed toward the cemetery.

A groan of disappointment shook the old negro's frame. He stretched his arms above his head, grasping for more light. When he looked down at the paralytic, the tears were coursing through his beard.

"What're you thinking 'bout?" asked Henry.

"'Bout a beautiful woman. It was at her house I went that night. I saw her once at Cedar Park, when I was trapping birds. She gave me money for my sick mother. He followed her there, I saw him. He didn't see me. I should have exposed him then.

Now, there is nothing left but the cross. Will you take me there to-night? It's the last thing you can do for me?" he pleaded.

Henry nodded. "First, tell me how you know that the child is in the cemetery?"

"He wouldn't come when mother was sick, he didn't come when she was dead, and when I was refused a place in the Catholic grounds, I sent to him for a permit to bury her in the yard beyond." Adams paused for breath. "I wrapped the little boy in a blanket and laid him in the basket that I used in secreting the birds that I carried to his office. He was not there, and I slipped through the alleys to the back of his house, and saw him go in the back door of his neighbor's home. I followed him." Again he stopped to rest. "He made me wait in a basement. My little brother got chilled and I held him in my arms to warm him. At last he came—gave me the permit, and laid a bundle in the basket. Then, he took the child and said: 'There's a dead one; go bury him in Maria's arms, and her child shall have a good home and care.' I see him now, an iron mask of corruption. Yet, fool! I believed him. I imagined my poor mother pleased and the beautiful lady comforted. I hurried home. There, by that window, she lay in her wooden box. I put the cold, still babe in her arms and spread the quilt over them. I sat and waited for the sexton and undertaker." He paused again, exhausted. "They had promised to help me. They didn't hurry for a man like me, thank the Lord." His eyes had a pleading look, like one in the confessional.

Henry walked to the door to reassure himself by a look at Fredereka, who had come up quietly and remained outside listening intently. She was so violently excited that her eyes were bulging, her lips white, and her heart throbbing.

Encouraged by her presence, Henry went back to the paralytic, saying: "Yes, the sexton came——"

Adams continued: "They started up the hill. I went for a last look at the dear old face, turned the quilt down. There the little babe was rooting his nose into my mother's pale cheek. He looked up at me with his big, brown eyes, and I grabbed him and ran into the vault and shut the door; rolled him in some old clothes and laid him in the corner. He fretted a little; but I got outside before the men reached the house. Didn't object when they hurried my poor mother away." Adams wiped the tears from his eyes. "First tears since that night."

"You kept the boy?" asked Henry, trembling.

"A few weeks," he said. "I found out that my brother was dead, saw 'em bury him like a prince. He was puny and got chilled in the basement. Died, I guess.—I got attached to my brown-eyed boy.—I wanted to return him to his mother; but I knew that fiend would say I'd stole him.—He threatened to turn me over to the authorities for other misdemeanors if I ever told I'd been in the city that night.—He was vicious.—I was 'fraider of him than the devil himself.—He didn't know that I had the boy.—I got crazy over the babe; possessed with a fear that he'd find him, that he knew he was not dead, and would take him away from me to his den, where he could experiment on him and maybe murder him.—Then I got sick and he nearly starved." With each sentence the invalid paused to gain strength and breath. "I got so scared I began to conjure plans by which I could dispose of him.—O Lord, forgive me! Won't you take me to the cross? It'll be too late soon," he pleaded.

"Who was that mean doctor?" asked Henry, innocently.

"Don't ask me that," the man cried, staring wildly. "Tell now, after these years of faith and

penitence? *No!*" He threw his arms up wildly. "Take me to the cross."

"Sure, sure, I will. Just keep quiet; you see it ain't near dark. What did you do with the baby?" urged Henry, gently.

"What good will it do you to know? I'll not tell any names. I'll talk no more," he said.

"You didn't promise anything about that child. Wouldn't you like to confess what you did with him?" urged Henry, puzzled to know how to proceed. He realized that Luke Adams was failing fast.

"I did. I told the priest," stated Luke.

"An' now you are goin' to confess to me, an' then I'll take you to the graveyard an' back again," Henry promised.

"I used to do odd jobs around the Calvary Church and parsonage. I helped crate some furniture that was stored in one room; heard it was to be shipped to the widow of a former minister.—I remembered the woman; she was kind to my mother. Began scheming for a way to ship the boy with her things; she'd take care of him.—I'd watched experiments for years, and knew how to give narcotics.—I'd been making the babe sleep when I was away, so as no one would hear him cry; I'd trained him to sleep all day.—In the old vault, there was a queer iron box that was left when the bank burned.—I filed some air-holes in the top under the edge, kind o' out of sight; I put a pillow on the bottom and secured it fast by riveting leather straps to the iron.—I put the boy in a sack, and he kicked and laughed; but I fastened the sack so he would hang or lay all right if the box was upside down or straight.—I fed him well and gave him a full dose of medicine.—When he went to sleep, my heart was broke; I cried more than I did when my mother died. I oiled the lock, made it fast, laid the key in a crack, and covered it

with soft solder;—put the box on an old cart;—drove to the steamboat, and shipped him to that good woman. 'Twas a hard job to load the cart alone. I had the strength of a man crazed with grief.—With planks and a pry I succeeded.—That's all. Now carry me to the cross and let me die."

"Did you ever hear from the boy?" asked Henry, anxious for just a little more information.

"I was afraid to inquire. It may have been dumped in the river; the babe dead and the name destroyed," sighed the sick man.

"Was the name in the box?"

"Inside, to the right, there was a slip of black paper pasted to the iron; under it, I put a silk band. His mother's name was on it.—Now, take me to the cross, take me, take me," he pleaded.

"Is the doctor's name in the box" timidly questioned Henry.

"No; I've told enough. Take me—as you promised—to the cross," he pleaded.

"You are not strong enough to hold on to my back. I'll have to carry you in my arms," said Henry, making preparations to gratify his last desire.

He heard Miss Fredereka moving away, and knew she would have made the opening in the fence, and be waiting for them in the cemetery. They had planned that she was not to let the sick man know of her presence unless it was necessary to help get him back home. The night was clear and calm, and only stars were watching, when the old colored man gently placed his burden on his stomach in front of the great white cross. With his elbows on the ground and his chin in his hands, he appeared to be happy. Henry moved back, for the place on which he stood seemed holy ground. Fredereka came near and they could hear, not moans and lamentations, but a pathetic requiem of peace, of toil almost ended.

Presently he drew himself up to the tomb and clasped the base of the cross in his arms, then gently slid down on the grass, where an abrupt incline led away from the grave. From any position east or north, he would seem to disappear from view very quickly. The watchers kept him in sight.

Lying flat on his stomach, he made his way slowly down the ravine, across a ditch, under a fence, and over into the pauper's ground. Painfully and persistently he kept on, frequently pausing for strength and breath.

"We can't let him go any farther, Henry; go offer to help him," advised Fredereka. -

They were following him, and, as he appeared to be resting with his head on a grave, they approached slowly, and read the name on the slab—"Maria Adams"—his mother's grave. They lifted his head and looked into his face; he was dead. His white hair seemed like a halo around his peaceful countenance. From a path worn down smooth and the grass and stubbles rubbed one way, it was evident that he had been going to the cross to pray, and then creeping on his hands and knees down the ravine, past his mother's grave, and up the hill to his cottage. The sexton was wakened, and Luke Adams' body was carried to his home and later interred by the side of his mother. Uncle Henry took the pencil and completed the column of numbers, making the last one hundred.

CHAPTER XV.

REVELATIONS.

In the little grove at Finden, the autumn leaves were falling fast, huddling together in retired nooks and clinging around the rose bushes and shrubbery, covering up the daffodils and jonquils, or drifting aimlessly at the mercy of the coquetting winds. On a level spot at the foot of the little hill that sloped down from the old house, there was a great pile of leaves, apparently raked together for a bonfire, or to be conveniently hauled away and spread over the garden. Near by, the lately disturbed earth, under the old Hague tree, marred the beauty of the autumn scene. The "national trees" shivered in naked shame before each other, stripped of their blooming honors, and pillaged of their fruits. The old Peace Palace, denuded of its green adornments, was still the favorite spot of Varena Farnam. Here she climbed with her book and pillow when she sought to be alone. But the time had come when her quiet hour was to be seriously disturbed. Stretched along the boards that lay over two large limbs of the tree, her elbows resting on her cushion with her book open before her, she heard voices approaching and looked up questioningly.

"Who in the world can those people be with Grandmother, and what are they coming down here for?" she soliloquized. "Uncle Henry is guiding them, and with him is a matronly woman in a nurse's costume. And that beautiful woman, so quiet and sad, she looks like Russell. That must be her hus-

band with his arm around her. What a jolly, old, gray-headed man talking to Grandmother! He acts as if he was tickled to death about something. But that tall, dark man, I'd be afraid to meet him alone, even in the daylight. Why are they coming down to my old tree?" Then she looked down at the upturned earth and added: "Not to disturb my peace, maybe, but to solve the mystery, D. V." She lay down on her pillow with her eyes half closed and waited and listened. Russell, only, noticed her and smiled.

The little company stopped in front of the shock of leaves, and Henry spread three rugs along the ground. The women sat down on one and two of the men on the other. The nurse stood below, near Uncle Henry, who constantly mopped his brow with his bandanna. The atmosphere was vibrant with suppressed emotion and eager anticipation. Varena watched with humid eyes and listened with a trembling heart. Intuitively she felt some great change approaching.

Uncle Henry was the first to speak. He bowed, wiped his brow, cleared his throat, coughed, bowed again, and began: "Ladies an' gentlemen an' Grandmother." He hesitated, coughed, rubbed his head, and continued: "I should like to just say that I begged the privilege to bring you all to this grove on this occasion, an' I have 'quested the Judge to 'splain the situation." He moved back toward the leaves, wiping the perspiration from his face.

The venerable Judge Johnson came down before the company, and, keeping his eye on the dark-visaged man, in carefully chosen words, stated: "This is a family secret. It has been, in a measure, buried for twenty years. For the honor of the families connected, the skeleton is to be brought to view for an hour, and then disappear forever. The Omniscient has unravelled the mystery, has meted pun-

ishment and reward, afflicting the evil-doer and blessing the faithful. The past has been in His hands; the future we trust to Him. In my watchful interest over the daughter of an old sweetheart of mine, I suspected that—for some ulterior motive—she, at a critical period in her life, was being imposed upon. Unable to establish any facts or find a clue by which I could unravel the web, I kept my own counsel. I was three years in finding this lady, Miss Fredereka Lewis, who had been cruelly deprived of her privileges as a nurse by the instigation of an influential physician, and had joined the Salvation Army. We have been in communication since, and I have found the Army an efficient and conscientious detective force. The injustice and mystery of her experience impressed upon her mind the vivid memory of a child, whose birth she had witnessed. Miss Lewis was a young girl then, when she washed and dressed a brown-eyed boy and watched him fall asleep listening to her first lullaby."

"Miss Lewis!" murmured the beautiful woman.

"Will you describe the child?" the Judge asked, turning to the nurse.

The dark man sprang to his feet. "Is this what you brought me here for?" he demanded. "You told me it was to christen the Mayor's new automobile."

The old Judge fixed his compelling eyes on him and spoke quietly: "Sit down, Dr. Harding. This is all in the family. Its remaining so, depends upon you. If it were given to the public, where would you land?"

"You can't prove anything," he asserted, falling back on the rug.

"Wait; and remember that it is for the sake of your wife and children and her brother's family that you are spared," averred Judge Johnson.

Mrs. Kendrick was very pale and her husband moved near and held her hand. Mrs. Falconer was calm and happy; for she had heard all the particulars from her faithful servant immediately on his reaching home. She had rewarded his faithfulness by humoring his wish to have the revelation made at the old home and in the grove where the secret had been entombed. Russell, to whom the scene was of most vital interest, stood apart, with livid lips and flaming eyes. Grandmother had taken him alone and prepared him for what was coming.

"Miss Lewis," said Judge Johnson.

Miss Fredereka modestly stated: "The night of the Bernadotte ball, about twenty years ago, in the home of Mrs. Kendrick I washed and dressed a beautiful baby boy, with a bald head, brown eyes, perfect ears. There was not a blemish about him, unless a slight bend in the little finger could be considered one."

Mayor Kendrick and Russell simultaneously lifted their hands and looked at their fingers, then smiled at each other, and Richard said: "A family heredity."

The Judge, gratified, continued: "The night of the great international party I returned to the city with my friend, and, impelled by some superhuman influence, went into his home. I looked at the child to find not one characteristic feature of the family—receding chin, pug nose, heavy hair. I turned it over and found one defective ear on the dead babe's head."

"I never killed the child. He died. What is your object in coming here to the woods and telling this to strangers?" asked the Doctor, nervously.

"I am sure you have not forgotten that Mrs. Falconer's honored husband was the pastor of your church for a number of years," stated the Judge.

"I have the greatest respect for Mrs. Falconer and would spare her this uncomfortable, damnable scene," replied Dr. Harding.

"Quiet, Doctor. Better for Luella's comfort that you are a little distance from home. However, the chief reason of our being here is that the first right to know the whole truth belongs to *Grandmother*." The Judge spoke the name with a peculiar sweetness as he bowed to her. "We are indebted for the consummation of our hopes to Mrs. Falconer and her faithful servant."

During these remarks, Uncle Henry was removing the leaves and bringing to view a rusty iron box, recognizable as an old-fashioned deposit-box, which might have been used before the advent of bank-safes.

Judge Johnson pointed to it and continued: "This safe was shipped to Mrs. Falconer, put off at the landing, and, with some furniture that happened to come at the same time, was hauled over to the house; it was supposed to be full of silver plate returned after the war. It was an hour or more before the safe could be opened, when the key was accidentally found by removing some solder from a crevice. Strapped to a pillow and fastened securely to the bottom was a child—asleep." A lump in the Judge's throat checked his words.

Mabel Kendrick leaned against her husband, with her eyes fixed on Russell. The interest was intense. Henry opened the safe door. The pillow had been preserved and laid in its place.

The Judge continued: "Grandmother's daughter had given birth to a boy a few days previous, and the mysterious stranger was taken to her breast, twin brother to her own son; and, as such, they have been reared and educated, the truth known only to the parents, the old family physician, and Uncle

Henry. Grandmother will confirm these statements."

"Supposing all that you say to be true, how can you connect this old box with our families?" demanded Dr. Harding.

"I have been waiting for you to ask that question," replied the Judge, smiling. "If you will look carefully, you may see a piece of black paper pasted inside the iron box. It is more noticeable now than it was years ago; for the paper is mouldy and the iron rusty. It has not yet been disturbed. There may be revelation or disappointment for us. Uncle Henry, take your knife and remove the paper, please."

Henry did so with trembling hands and took from behind it a little silk band with the name "Mabel Kendrick" stamped indelibly on it. It was yellow and rotten; but Miss Lewis recognized it, and said:

"I made some little belly-bands out of a white silk skirt of Mrs. Kendrick's. This happened to be the one with the name on it. I remember when I pinned it on the baby." Her eyes glowed with excitement and gratitude.

Richard Kendrick lifted his wife to her feet and kept one arm around her trembling form. Taking Mrs. Falconer's hand, he said: "Our gratitude to you is boundless."

Russell came to them. He had never experienced the need of a mother, because of the all-sufficiency of the Grandmother; but, as he realized that this man and his wife were his parents, his heart throbbed with a new sensation, his soul glowed with a filial affection unknown before, and he looked up with pride at the noble father and took his beautiful mother in his arms and kissed her tenderly. Then, with an impulse born of true nobility, he turned and hugged Grandmother heartily.

Mrs. Falconer, disengaging herself and smiling through her tears, said: "I shall have to part with you, my boy. You have been good to me, and we shall miss you; but greater things are in store for you; and my happiness is complete in the knowledge that Richard and Mabel Kendrick are your parents."

"Will you leave the home of your childhood and go with us?" asked Richard.

"It is yours to command, and mine to obey," said Russell, smiling. "I am not yet of age."

"My baby for one year, anyway," cried Mabel, joyously.

Not for a moment during the interview had Varena been absent from Russell's thoughts; he now led his parents toward the Peace Palace, and held out his arms. They looked up in the tree and thought they had never beheld a more beautiful vision. The young girl had risen, and, poising for an instant—with her dainty feet resting on the bough of the tree, the soft folds of her delicate blue dress clinging to her shapely limbs, her loosened curls falling about her flushed face, and her great, wistful eyes looking out appealingly—she lifted her arms and dropped easily to Russell's breast, as she had learned to fall on the mattress in the school gymnasium. He pressed her to his heart for one brief moment, then presented her to his father and mother and Judge Johnson. She was very shy of Mr. and Mrs. Kendrick, but she took the old Judge's breath away when she threw her arms around him and kissed his wrinkled cheek.

When Mayor Kendrick walked over to take the hands of Miss Lewis and Uncle Henry, words seemed to have forsaken him; and the Judge slapped him on the shoulder, saying: "Here's a man who sways an audience by the power of his eloquence, subdues a city council to his will, controls the popu-

lar vote by his harangue, dumb with gratitude before an old colored man and a modest nurse."

Uncle Henry mopped his brow, bowing and smiling. Miss Fredereka said: "We understand, and the Salvation Army knows, too, where our large donation came from."

Judge Johnson interrupted by asking: "Where did you send Dr. Harding, Uncle Henry?"

"I 'lowed as you would want room in the automobile for Marse Russell; an' as the Doctor seem'd 'bout to start up over the hill, I said as how he could catch the packet at our landin', if he went straight across the meadow. The boat whistled for the village just a minute ago," explained Henry.

The party went up to the big side veranda, where Jim and Jenny, obedient to orders, had brought out little tables and served cream and cake and fruits. After some deliberation, it was decided that Russell should accompany them to his new home, and Mrs. Falconer excused herself to look over the mail that the delivery man had left in the box.

"We haven't heard from Ralph since he left for Harlam, Tenn., where he is to take the position of assistant cashier in the bank in which we are interested. If you will excuse me, I'll get the mail, so that Russell may hear from him before he leaves."

Russell followed Mrs. Falconer to the grape-arbor, and with his eyes drew her aside.

"Grandmother, tell me, have you known all these years that Varena was not my sister?" he eagerly questioned.

"Yes, Russell; and I have recognized that your affection for each other was a natural affinity, of which you were wholly unconscious. I have always intended giving you the history of your coming to me. And have prayerfully waited for the proper time to come when it would be right for you to know

your true relationship. My faith has been rewarded in the blessings of to-day."

"Then it would not be wrong——" began Russell.

"I anticipate your desire," interrupted Mrs. Falconer; "go home with your parents. Let a few months of separation intervene, and then we will talk more about it."

"May I say good-bye to Varena alone?" requested the boy.

"Certainly; you will find her upstairs. I sent her to help Jenny pack your valise. She knows best what you will most wish to take with you."

Mrs. Falconer went on out for the mail, and Russell returned to the house. He found Varena standing by his secretary, gazing at a scrap of paper, on which was scribbled the original of the little verse: "If I were a dewdrop and you a red rose." Two big tears were loitering on her long, dark lashes.

"Leave Jennie to finish the packing and come with me, Varena, I'll show you the rose bush that gave inspiration to the poem," said Russell, smiling into her wistful eyes.

Something in his manner calmed the throbbing of her heart, the possessive note in his voice dried her tears. Together they sought the mound where she had slept while the boys crowned her with flowers.

The company on the veranda waited, finished eating their ice-cream, and still waited. An hour passed before the truants appeared, flushed and happy. Then they sat together on the old settee where so often they had listened to Grandmother's stories, and now she read to them a letter from Ralph.

Mrs. Falconer was greatly agitated over the news that she had just received from her son. It was almost as startling a revelation as that which they had witnessed under the old "Peace Palace" tree.

"I have a letter from Ralph that I may as well read to you. As Judge Johnson said, 'it is all in the

family.' Whatever concerns our children now, must be of interest to you all," and Mrs. Falconer continued:

"Dear Grandmother:

"When I left home to take the position of assistant cashier in the bank at Harlam, I really intended coming direct. Now, dear Grandmother, to make you understand why I did not do so and get you to forgive me for leaving you so long without a letter—knowing how you will worry about me—I must go back and explain some things that happened while we were in college.

"I knew and loved a very beautiful girl and she loved me. We met clandestinely and planned to keep our engagement a secret until we had finished school and I could visit her in her home. I learned, incidentally, that her father was a hard, tyrannical man, exacting and unsympathetic, and I determined to be started in business and able to provide for his daughter before trying to secure his consent. We were very happy until he came, unexpectedly, and took her home from the seminary. She left a note for me, in which she said that she was expecting to sail for Europe with her brother, the journalist, in a few days and for me not to write until I heard from her. I waited and watched the newspapers. The week following, I saw the list of passengers who sailed from New York, in which her brother's name was mentioned. But either her name had been omitted or she did not go. In the latter case I hoped that she would attend the college commencement. After that I waited for a letter. You will recall the fact that I got the mail out of the box every day while I was at home this summer. If I did not get a letter, I wanted to know that Russell didn't either. They were great friends at one time. Dear old Russ.

“Well, when I left the old home and the dearest Grandmother that ever lived, I determined to satisfy my mind about Eleanor before I went South. I knew I could not start into my new position with any ambition or success with this awful uncertainty gnawing at my heart, and that I must find my sweetheart. I could not risk a letter on account of her father. So I just switched off at the junction and took the train for the city. I found the avenue on which I knew she lived, and went within a block of the house several times. I was cherishing the hope of seeing her mother, whom I knew was kind and gentle, like you, Grandmother; but I was horribly afraid of running into the despicable father. Finally, I ventured past the house. My darling had often described her home to me and that of her aunt’s in the same yard. It must have been her Aunt Mabel that I saw on the veranda—yes, she says it was. She is awfully afraid that I will not word this letter exactly right. Anyway, Grandmother, the beautiful woman reminded me of Russ. She looked at me with a questioning gaze, like he used to when he thought I was up to some mischief. But, Grandmother, she looked so sad that it made me feel like I was a well of tears, and I rushed down the street with the lids tight over my eyes to keep from flooding the sidewalk. No joke, Grandmother; I was ‘powerful’ blue myself, as Uncle Henry would say. I saw her the next night, and there never was a face more beautiful or more sad. I wish you could see her, Grandmother; you would know how to make her happy, maybe. I walked past the house the next evening and saw no one. I just could not leave the city without some definite information; so I was endeavoring to muster sufficient courage to call at the front door and pose as a book-agent, when something fell on the walk in front of me. I looked and found a spool of thread. Seeing no one in sight, I

went away quickly. When alone, I began to unwind the thread, and soon discovered a bit of paper, on which was written in a beloved handwriting the words: 'Come to the alley gate at 10 o'clock.' I went, and, in a few moments, clasped my darling in my arms. I can never tell you, dear Grandmother, how she wept on my neck; how unselfishly she had loved me; how nobly she was sacrificing herself for me; how she watched me walk past for three days, before her strong resolution gave way to her longing for me and she threw the little message to call me to her. I tell you all this, dear Grandmother, for you are one of the few women who never grow too old to understand these heart experiences.

"I planned to come again the next night with a closed carriage; for you know that one of the characteristic elements of a thorough blue-blooded Kentucky gentleman is a run-away wedding. The day was a long one, but 10 o'clock came. Her father had just gone with a party to tour through the country in the new automobile her uncle had brought from New York; so she took me in the house to see her mother, Luella Harding. She knows you, and she sang in the choir when Grandfather was pastor of Calvary Church. She was so good to us. Packed a large trunk full and helped me carry it down-stairs. She felt bad when she told us good-bye; but she is coming to see us soon. We took the 12:10 train and reached the junction about 3 A.M. Here we had four hours to wait. We had plenty of time to eat breakfast, find the clerk, procure a license, and call on the minister. Then, as Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Farnam, we bought tickets for our destination.

"The president of the bank gave us a cordial welcome and has been very kind in helping me find a little cottage. Of course, we do not say anything about being bride and groom; for it will be pleasanter to avoid the charivari and jokes that they play on a fel-

low down here. We are going to settle down to business now, and not come home for three years; then you will all be glad to see us. And, Grandmother, you never can know how grateful I am that you sent me down to take a position in Harlam. Eleanor is looking over my shoulder, reading every word that I write. She sends her love to all of you and says you need not worry about trying to help us set up housekeeping, for she found a letter in her trunk with a \$5,000 wedding check from her mother. But I would like to have the quilts that you pieced for me and my blankets. Don't make a mistake and send the pair you had made for Varena out of the wool that she made a saddle to ride down hill on. It makes me a little bit homesick to write to you, Grandmother, but I am the happiest boy in the world too. Write and tell me all the news and give my love to Russ and Sister and Jim and Jennie and Uncle Henry and Flash and the cats and bird and horses, and most for you.

Lovectionately,

RALPH.

Harlam, Tenn., Sept., 19—

"Eleanor Harding!" ejaculated Varena. "Was that her father who was here?"

"That was her father," said Judge Johnson. "She is like her mother."

"I knew she loved Ralph," said Russell, quietly. "She gave me her confidence one evening after our last lesson together."

"Another link that unites our families," said Richard Kendrick. "Mrs. Falconer, you have given us a nephew and a son. What compensation shall we ever be able to make to you?"

"I know," said Judge Johnson, winking mischievously at Varena.

"Be good to the boys and I am satisfied," said

Mrs. Falconer, while the tears again made their appearance.

The æsthetic nature of Mabel Kendrick—the faith, hope, beauty, and purity of soul, the ambition, aspiration, and longing of mind, the love, appreciation, and gratitude of heart—expressed itself in the terseness of her graceful figure, in the pallor of her fair face, and in the liquid depths of her blue eyes. Her happiness was too deep for words.

“We must say good-bye to Mrs. Falconer if we wish to reach the city before night,” Judge Johnson suggested.

As adieus were exchanged, Richard Kendrick, realizing that Varena would be deprived of her companion, held her hand in a warm clasp and said: “We shall take you home with us some day.” He was surprised at the crimson that suffused her cheeks; but his wife smiled with gratification and kissed her tenderly.

When the marvellous new machine, with its honk-honk-honk vibrating through the hills, turned into the main road, carrying away Russell and his new-found parents and friends, Mrs. Falconer put her arms around Varena as they stood on the old veranda watching for the last flutter of a handkerchief, and said:

“The destiny of my three darlings decided in a day.”

“Russell is coming back, Grandmother, and we’ll never leave you,” sobbed Varena.

“D. V., Grandmother,” responded Uncle Henry, from the stone steps at the end of the veranda.



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